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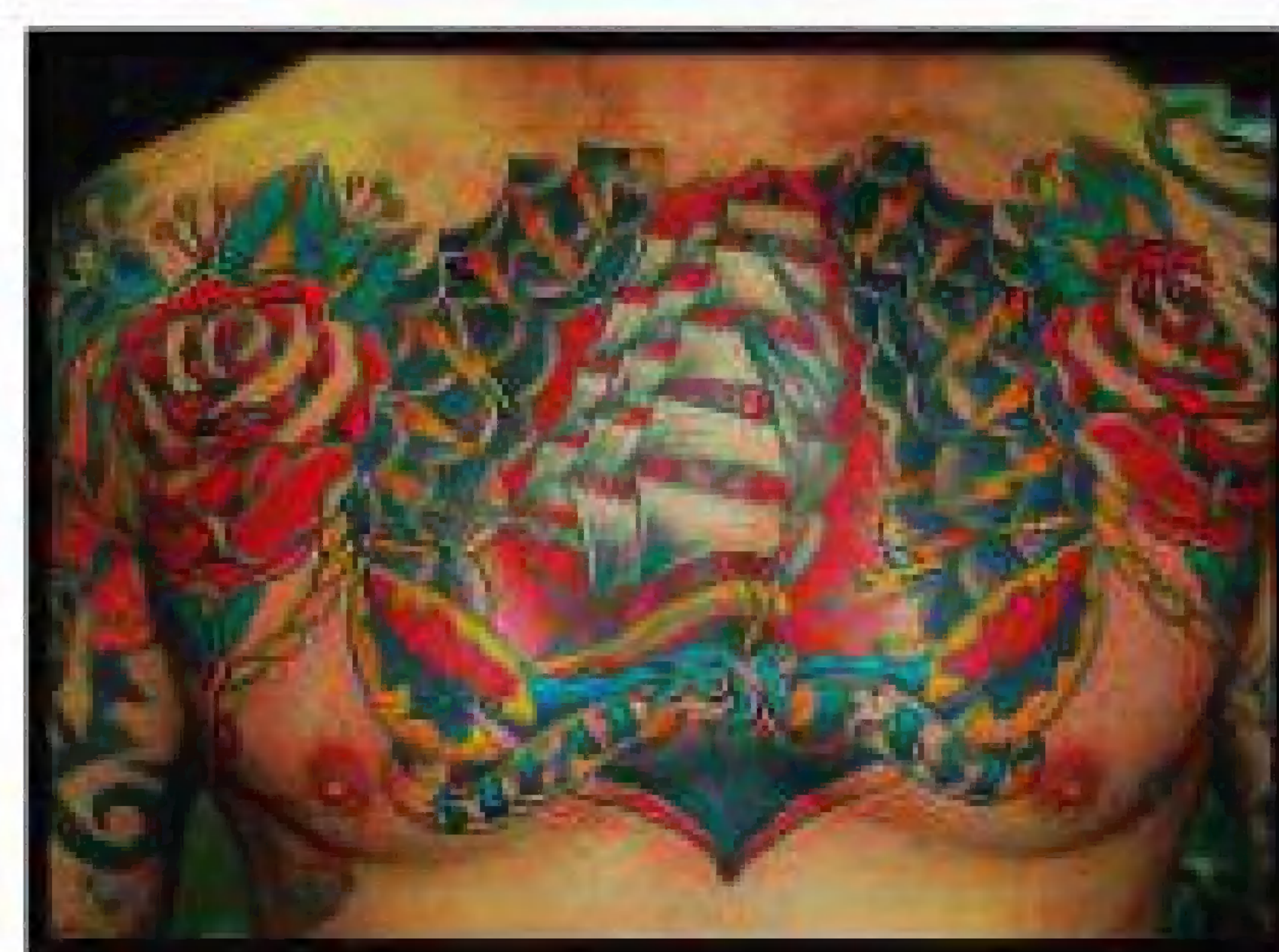
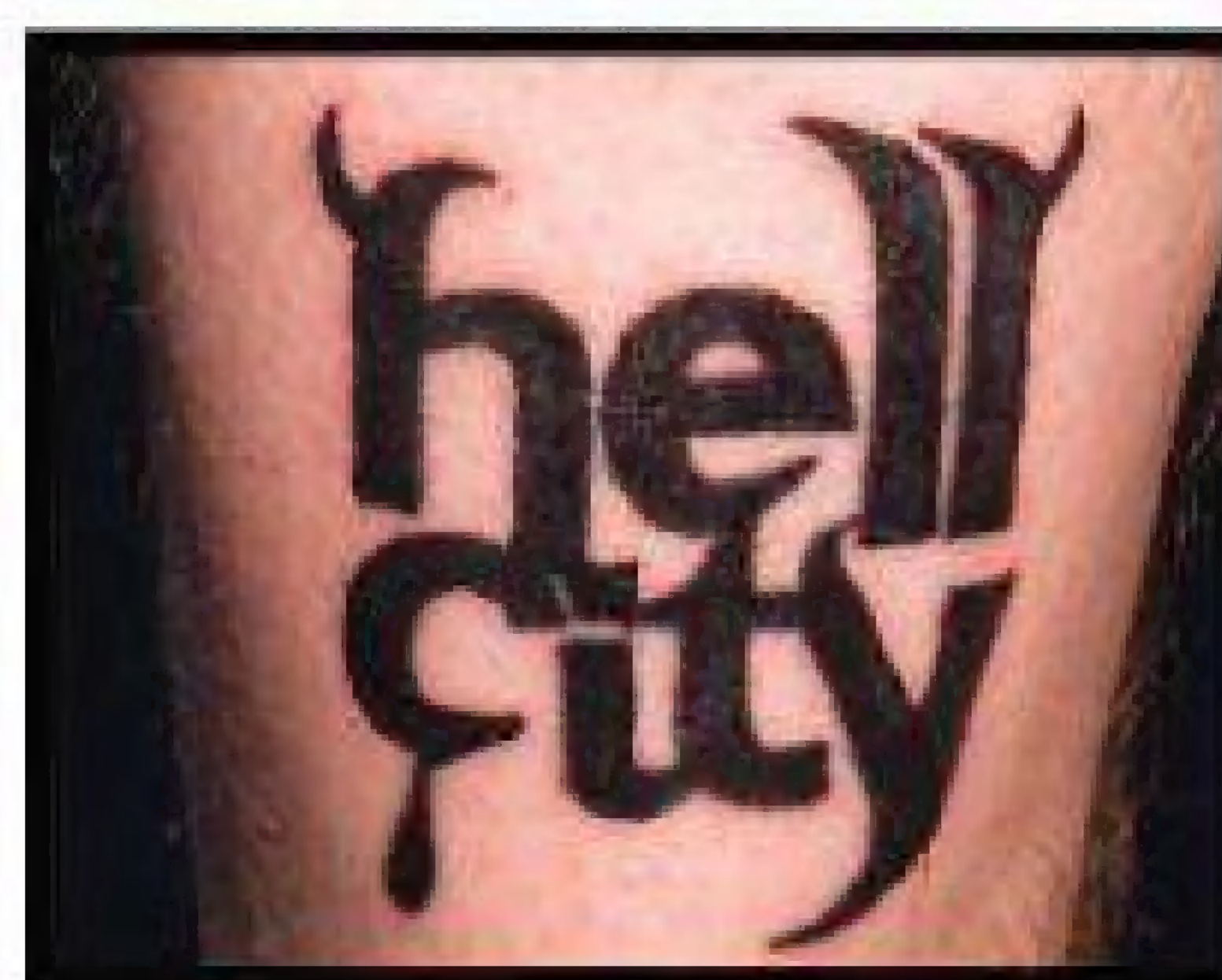
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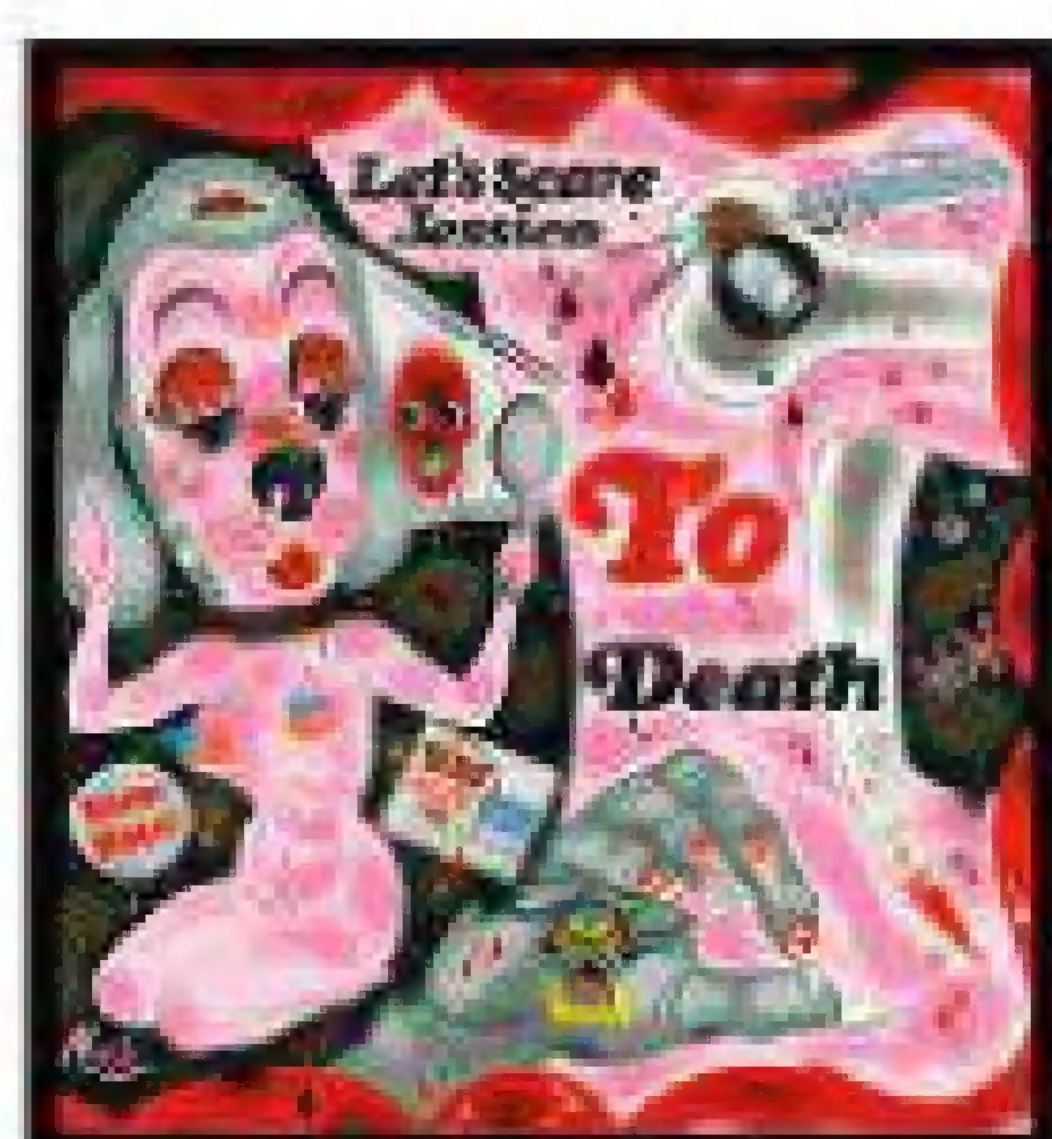
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editorial

THE BAD, THE GOOD, AND THE SWEATY

It'll be old news by the time this sees print, but it's important that I put it out here. I was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Billy Eason of Capital Tattoo & B.I.R.D. Productions, who put on the Richmond convention. He was 72. The last time I really sat down with Billy was at a steak house in Columbus, Ohio, with a crowd of other hungry refugees from Hell City. I didn't talk to him often but always enjoyed his company. Roll on, Billy.

Another sad passing to mark is actor Leslie Nielsen—a funny, funny guy in a world that needs more of them. Just don't call him Shirley.

Recently I read a book by a kind of amazing guy named Jake Adelstein, called "Tokyo Vice: An American Reporter on the Police Beat in Japan." Adelstein is a Jewish cat from Missouri who managed to get a job as a crime reporter for Yomiuri Shinbun, the most popular daily paper in Tokyo. I read it partly from my fascination with crime in general, and specifically to see if it gave some insight into the world of the Yakuza.

The answer is, yes it does get into the Yakuza toward the very end. The early part of the book is a too-long narrative concerning Adelstein's shaky proficiency with aspects of the language and hiring on with the paper. A lot of his work sounds like old-school reporter stuff, hungover, unshaven guys in rumpled suits showing up at fires and hospitals to get the facks, ma'am. There are some terrific insights into Japanese culture and the curious relationship between cops and reporters over there. Actually the whole thing seems to take forever to get around to the real Yakuza stuff, but that could be my interpretation because of my focus.

Along the way, Adelstein admits he may have gotten an Aussie friend killed by letting her chase information on a Yakuza big wig. Or at least, she went off looking for information never to be seen or heard from again. Apparently the Yakuza are big on disappearing bodies into the poured-concrete foundations of buildings. Since they control the construction companies, it's easy for them to slip an extra ingredient onto a concrete pouring—an ingredient like a body.

The big payoff for Adelstein's work is still building in the world news media. He managed to document how

some top Yakuza cats got to UCLA and obtained liver transplants. This is a story because, number one, their travel to the U.S.—as known gangsters—should have

been completely restricted. And then, it seems that they were given livers with no respect for the waiting list at all. It seems they got special treatment because they were cash customers. Heavy cash. One well-known boss named Goto Tadamasa allegedly made a deal with the FBI to trade information for travel access to the U.S. Then, it's said, he shelled out a million bucks for his liver. Others were said to have paid in the area of \$400,000.

Japan, despite being a technology-rich country, severely limits organ transplants. So much so that they might as well be illegal.

The question for me, and Adelstein addresses this, is how come so many Yakuza have liver disease. This, he says, tracks back to their heavy tattooing. Adelstein maintains that the full-body ink somehow jams up the body's ability to sweat, bottling up poisons inside the body and causing internal problems. As a lesser cause, he notes that a lot of the older guys had the ink done back some years ago and might well have one of the hepatitis variations. Hepatitis C almost invites liver cancer along for the ride.

I've met an awful lot of people that are as heavily tattooed as any Yakuza and never heard of any bottled-up sweating complaints. I know areas on me that have been tattooed in multiple layers sweat just as well as bare skin. So unless there's something in those old tebori inks that clogs skin, I'm inclined to discount Adelstein's theory. The more credible reason for liver disease in Yakuza is old unsterile needles from the past and hard drinking.

Be all that as it may, I'm going to pull out my old tape of "The Naked Gun," enjoy Leslie Nielsen's screen antics and relax.

--Chris Pfouts
Editor



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letters to the editor

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THE WRITING ON THE WALL

I have been told that you guys did a story on Cincinnati's graffiti wizard Jason Brunson a few years ago. I've never had the pleasure of meeting Jason in person or even seeing his walls in the flesh, as it might be. But I've seen pictures and I was stoked from that alone. The guy has a style like nobody else I've ever seen.

In the interest of expanding my art education without having to travel great distances through time and space—I live outside San Diego—can you tell me what issue the Dana Brunson story was in and if I can get a copy? Thanks a mil. Vaya con Dios.

--Mike Salinas
National City, CA
Via E-mail

Sure can. It was the November, 2007, issue, and it has a ton of photos of his graffiti work.

ANOTHER LOST SOUL

I remember you guys did a cover story on Jesse James years ago when he was married to his second wife. I realize it's kind of dated now but I'm writing a biography of James and I'm looking for all the deep background I can find. Can I get a copy of that issue whenever it was?

--Bernard von Castle
Via E-mail

James was on the cover in July, 2004. Good luck finding one. You can try eBay. It sold off the rack like ice tea in July. Within a few days of release there were no retail copies to be found in

most locations. We definitely have no copies around here. So we say again, good luck.

CORRECTION

In the December, 2010, issue, my work was pictured on page 90. The name below my tattoo is not mine. My name is under the picture on the bottom.

--Michael Buckley
The Underground
Olean, NY
Via E-mail

We do the very best we can to make sure this sort of thing doesn't happen—and generally we get it right. But we are human—most of us—and we do make mistakes once in a blue moon. We're sorry it was the case with you. If you send us some more work, we'll do our best to get it right.

AS TIME GOES BY

The reason I always go for ITA on the stand is for Bill DeMichele's convention photos. He's the best. He singled me out and took my picture in Detroit a few years ago. It was the best photo of me anyone has ever taken. I've got to figure he does the same for everyone he gets in front of the lens.

As long as he's shooting for you, you'll have a reader out here.

--MeShell Tucker
Inkster, MI

HEY ITA! GOTTA SUGGESTION?

Can you help me find a really good

Nu Skool tattooer around here? I'm in Lafayette, Louisiana. I figured if anyone would know, you guys would.

--Jeanne Blalock
Via E-mail

I have a tattoo design that I've worked on for years. I hired a college art student to whip up a good pen and ink drawing of what I want, and she caught it exactly. Or almost exactly. Close enough for government work, know what I mean? I did everything I could to try and convince her to tattoo it on me, starting with offering to buy her the equipment. She wouldn't do it.

So anyway, I need the best tattooer I can find in the Dallas area. Attached, I sent a Xerox of the design. Who should I go see?

--David Forrester
Via E-mail

I'm a film buff. Classic movies are my life, really. I want to get four portraits—one of James Cagney on my left forearm, Bogart on the right forearm. I want Lauren Bacall on my right biceps above Bogie, and Robert Mitchum's face on my left biceps. That's for right now. Later I plan to get a kind of mist and clouds thing on my chest with the faces of Brando, Lee Marvin, Jane Russell, Clark Gable, Katherine Hepburn from "The African Queen," Charlie Chaplin, Ben Turpin, Harold Lloyd, Laurel & Hardy, W.C. Fields and Mae West. It's a monster job. But I just want the arm stuff for now.

And so I need the name of an expert portrait tattooist. I'm in Seattle. I've found a few artists who are extremely

talented. Actually I think I found the right one, he's excellent and he seems like he's up for the job. If it were you guys, who would you go to around Seattle? I guess I could travel as far as Portland for the really right artist.

--Benjamin Terhune
Via E-mail

We get letters like these last three all the time. It's not our place to go around suggesting artists for one specific job or another. Besides, like most really good things in life, the journey is as interesting as the destination—if not more so. So get out there on the journey, find yourself a tattoo artist and get your jobs done and send us some photos when it's finished.

WERE YOU BORN IN A BARN?

You know that thing people who hate tattoos always say? 'What about when you get old? What then?' It's like when you leave a door open and the same droolers say "Whatsa matter? Were you born in a barn?'

I tell them 'No, I wasn't born in a barn—we lived on a hill and the door shut by itself.' That shuts that one off. As for how I'm gonna look when I'm old and tattooed, I tell 'em, 'I guess I'll look like an old coot with tattoos.' I mean, what the hell? It doesn't even make sense. A lot of old dudes don't give a rat's ass how they look anyway, with black sox and Bermuda shorts at the beach, or droopy-ass trousers and shirts with gravy stains down the front. In comparison with that, I don't see the problem.

People with comments like that, they'd complain if you hung them with a new rope, know what I mean?

--Francis Gerhard
Thunder Bay, Canada
Via E-mail

GETTING PICTURES PUBLISHED

Hey, how would you like me to send

photos from my tattoo portfolio for publishing? Thanks.

--Tyler Malek
Via E-mail

I'm a new and upcoming tattoo artist, and I am curious how I get my work published in your magazine?

--Nic Westfall
Via E-mail

Who do I send photos I would like published to?

--Joey Singleton
Via E-mail

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There is no specific person to direct them to—it all goes to the same place, which is the right place. Be sure that your name, shop name, and address are on the back of EACH PHOTO. A phone number is also helpful. Just throwing a piece of paper with the name on it into the envelope is not sufficient. If you need to be certain that the package arrived, use the U.S. Post Office's Delivery Confirmation system. They attach a green sticker to the item and you can check its status online. Or ship via FedEx or UPS. Because of the volume of mail we receive we cannot answer questions about an individual package either by phone or online.

Finally—we ask that you send us exclusive photographs. If you're sending the work to other places at the same time, we'd rather not get it. Our lead time is long—we work as much as five months ahead of the cover date, so be patient.

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HE FOUGHT THE LAW

California's

By Amanda Stephan

SIX YEARS AGO, JOHNNY ANDERSON, ALSO KNOWN AS JOHNNY TWO-THIRDS,

opened Yer Cheat'n Heart Tattoo in Gardena, California. Since its doors have opened, Yer Cheat'n Heart and its owner have been making waves and leaving a lasting impression on the surrounding shores of the South Bay area. In the vicinity, where Johnny grew up and which he describes as a "cool mixture" of beach and big city, he has created a studio that is home to 13 artists, as well as numerous high-profile guest artists. Successfully managing such a studio is a monumental undertaking, but Johnny Two-Thirds doesn't appear to be the slightest bit intimidated. "I really like making my customers happy," he said. "It took me a long time to figure this out, but I figure you can do tattoos to impress other tattooers or you can try and impress your customers. Sometimes you can do both, but I focus on giving them what they want. They have to wear it."





"God willing, I'll tattoo till the day I die."

The customers in Gardena do seem impressed with the level of work and the manner that it's delivered by Johnny and his crew at Yer Cheat'n Heart. With more than 15 years of tattooing behind him, it's not surprising that Johnny Two-Thirds is attracting attention. "I have been tattooing my whole adult life," he said. "I started professionally in 1996. I feel like I should be so much further along than I am, but it's good that as tattooers we continue to learn and improve. Once I stop learning I imagine tattooing will lose its appeal. God willing, that never happens."

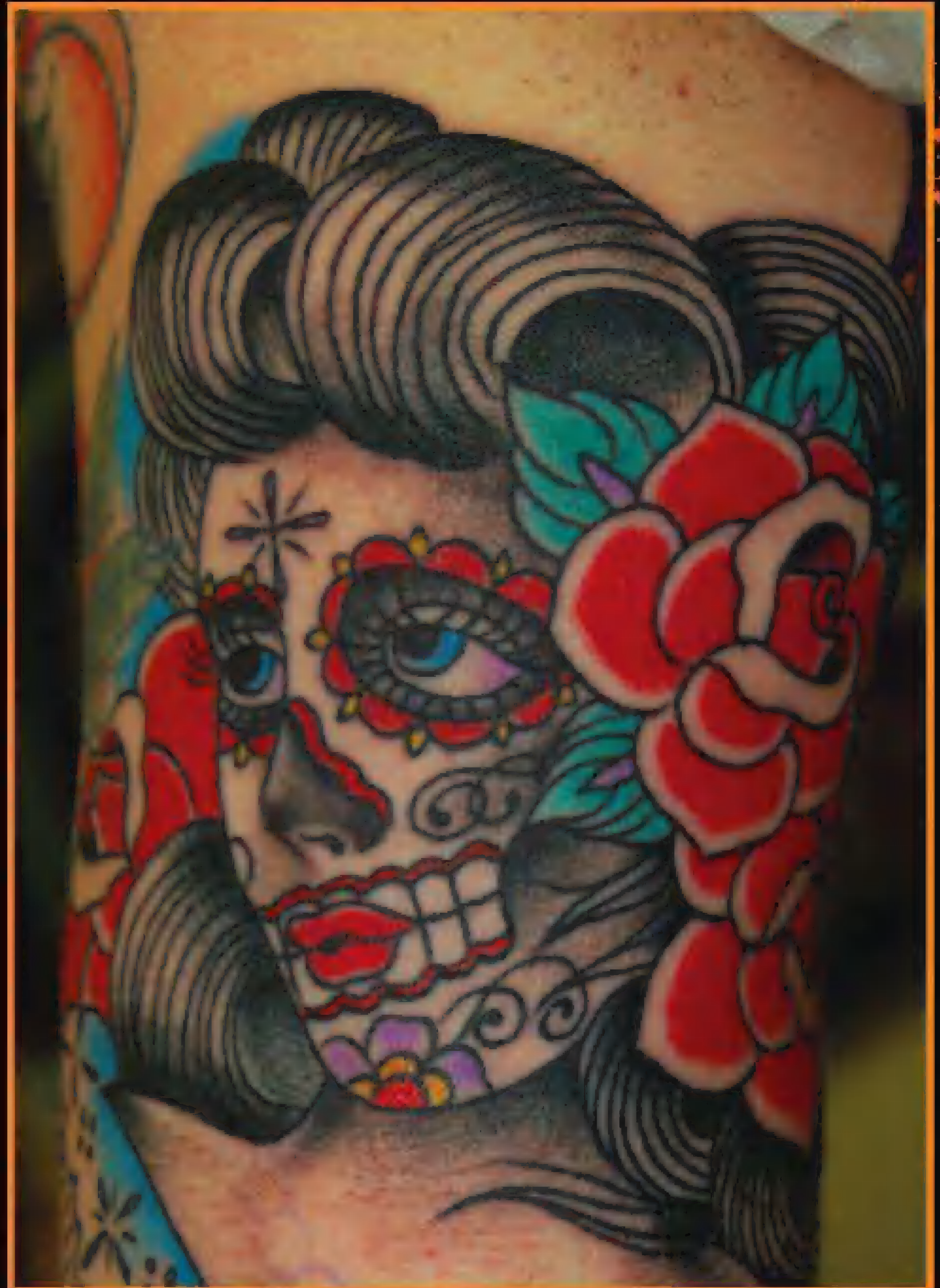
In the last several years, it hasn't just been his tattooing that has been thrusting Johnny Two-Thirds into the spotlight. In 2007, Johnny made a move to stifle those who threaten freedom of expression, specifically the freedom to expressing oneself in Hermosa Beach. He mounted a lawsuit against the city of Hermosa Beach, in an effort to get the town's ban on tattoo studios repealed. Johnny argued that the First Amendment of the Constitution should protect the artistic expression of tattoo artists. Therefore, the ban preventing tattoo studios from operating in Hermosa Beach was infringing on the artists' right to express themselves. Hermosa Beach's stance on tattooing was the familiar outdated belief that tattoo shops would encourage an unsavory element to congregate in the town. In response, Johnny Two-Thirds pointed out to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that Hermosa Beach has more bars per square foot than any other town in the country.

In the end, the court agreed with Johnny's premise and granted First Amendment protection for tattooing.

One of the court's presiding judges, Jay S. Bybee, wrote, "Thus, as with writing or painting, the tattooing process is inextricably intertwined with the purely expressive product (the tattoo) and is itself entitled to full First Amendment protection." This ruling has implications for tattooing far beyond the borders of Hermosa Beach. "I'm really proud of the First Amendment ruling. It's nice to be a footnote in tattooing history," Johnny said. "Now that tattooing is protected speech, we have so many more options. Really, we can focus on tattoos because we don't have to set up shops in dicey areas and deal with that. We can focus in on the art."

For Johnny Two-Thirds, the ruling will directly impact his day-to-day life as an artist. He is now able to open a studio in Hermosa Beach, the motivation behind his lawsuit. This new studio, Hermosa Tattoo Company, will help service the ever-growing client base at Yer Cheat'n Heart. In Hermosa Beach, Johnny will work closer to home, avoiding the seven miles of Los Angeles traffic. This, in turn, will free up time for him to spend with his family. "Tattooing or art, for me at least, can become all consuming. I am always working on that balance," Johnny said. "I can get so wrapped up in a big tattoo or painting project. My wife has become very good at reminding me when I need to take more time off. I work six days a week, ten hour days, so the rest of my waking hours are spent with the wife and kids."


The strength required to shoulder all of this responsibility requires a strong foundation. Johnny credits his mentor, Jeff "Lefty" Theilman with preparing him to handle all that

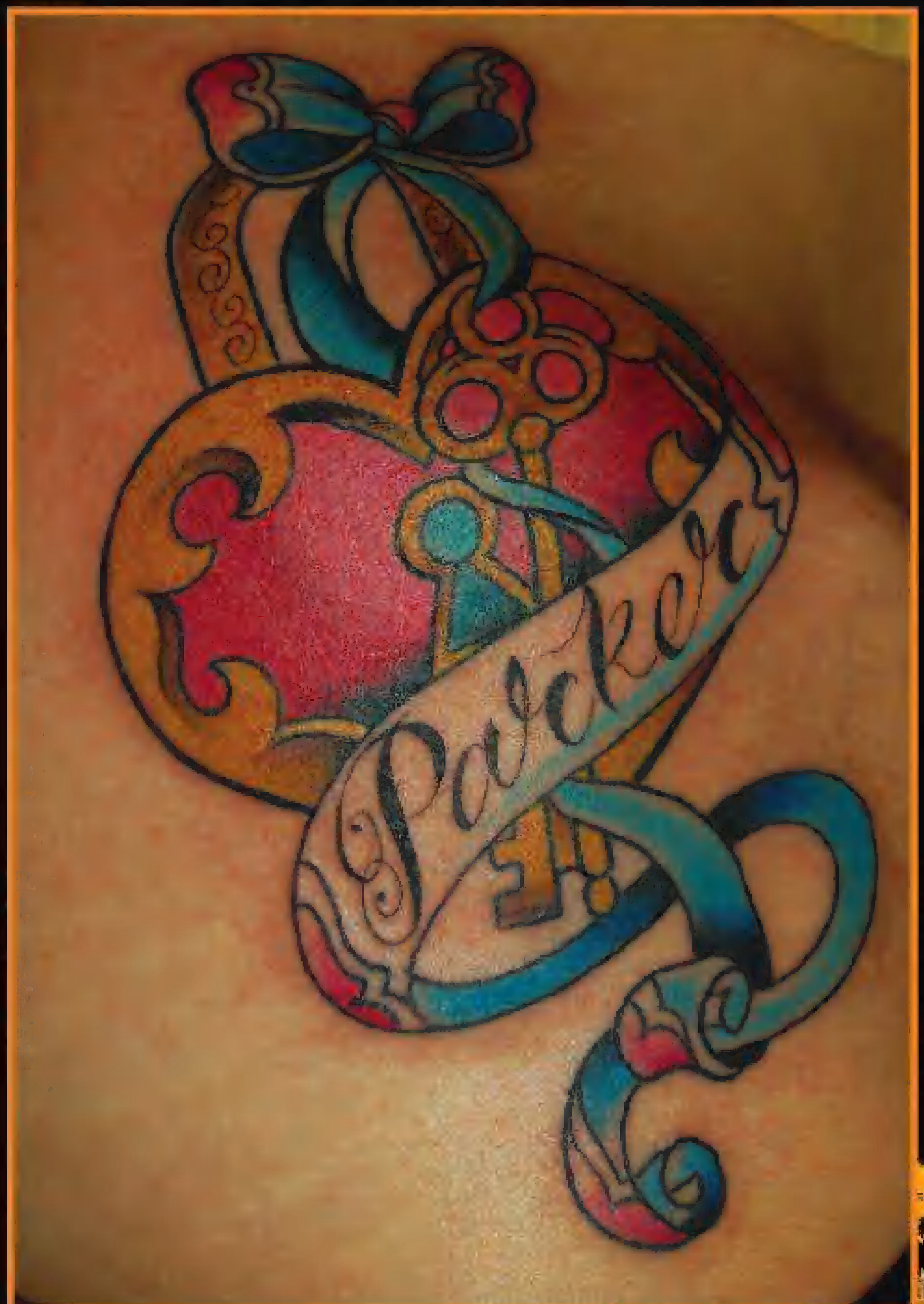


his career has demanded of him. "I was really fortunate to be apprenticed by Jeff," he said. "That was formal art instruction. He told me the first time we sat down together, 'If I do this, it's going to be a traditional apprenticeship.' I didn't even know what that meant, but looking back, it gave me a foundation that I still lean on fifteen years later." Thielman is also responsible for giving Johnny the "Two-Thirds" moniker. It refers to Johnny's approach to the black shading in his tattoos. It also pays homage to Johnny Two Thumbs.

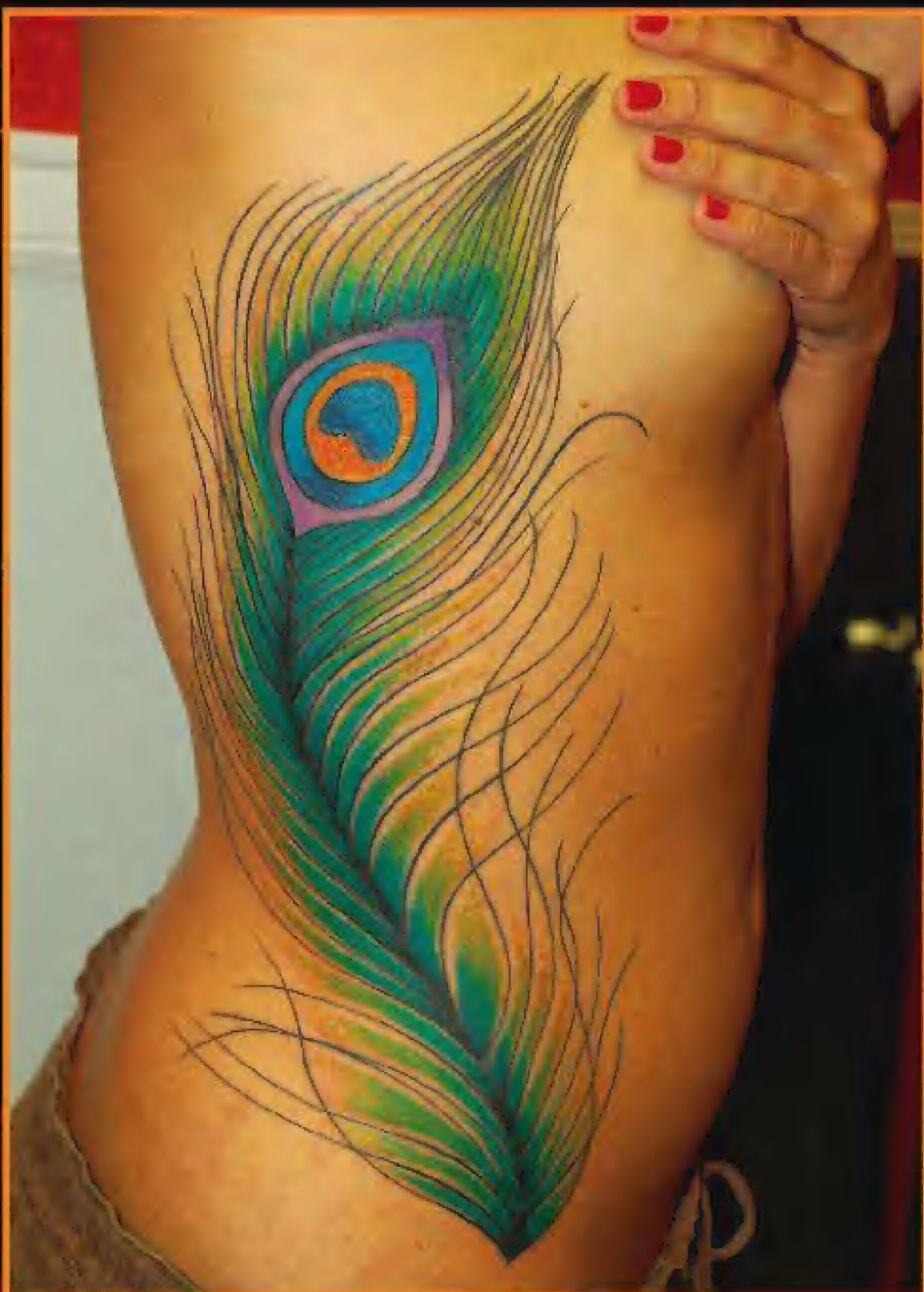
Beyond what he has absorbed from Thielman, Johnny directs all of his thanks to God. "For me, my relationship with God supersedes art. I'm a totally sold out, born again Christian," he said. Johnny's devotion to God is no secret around his studio. His customers are often the welcoming recipients of the tale of Johnny's road to rebirth. "When I share with them my story, how God revealed Himself to me, I think most are surprised that a tattooer can be a Christian. To me it seems very normal. I know quite a few tattooers that love Jesus, but my customers always seem so surprised to find that out. I guess it's cool they don't see it coming."

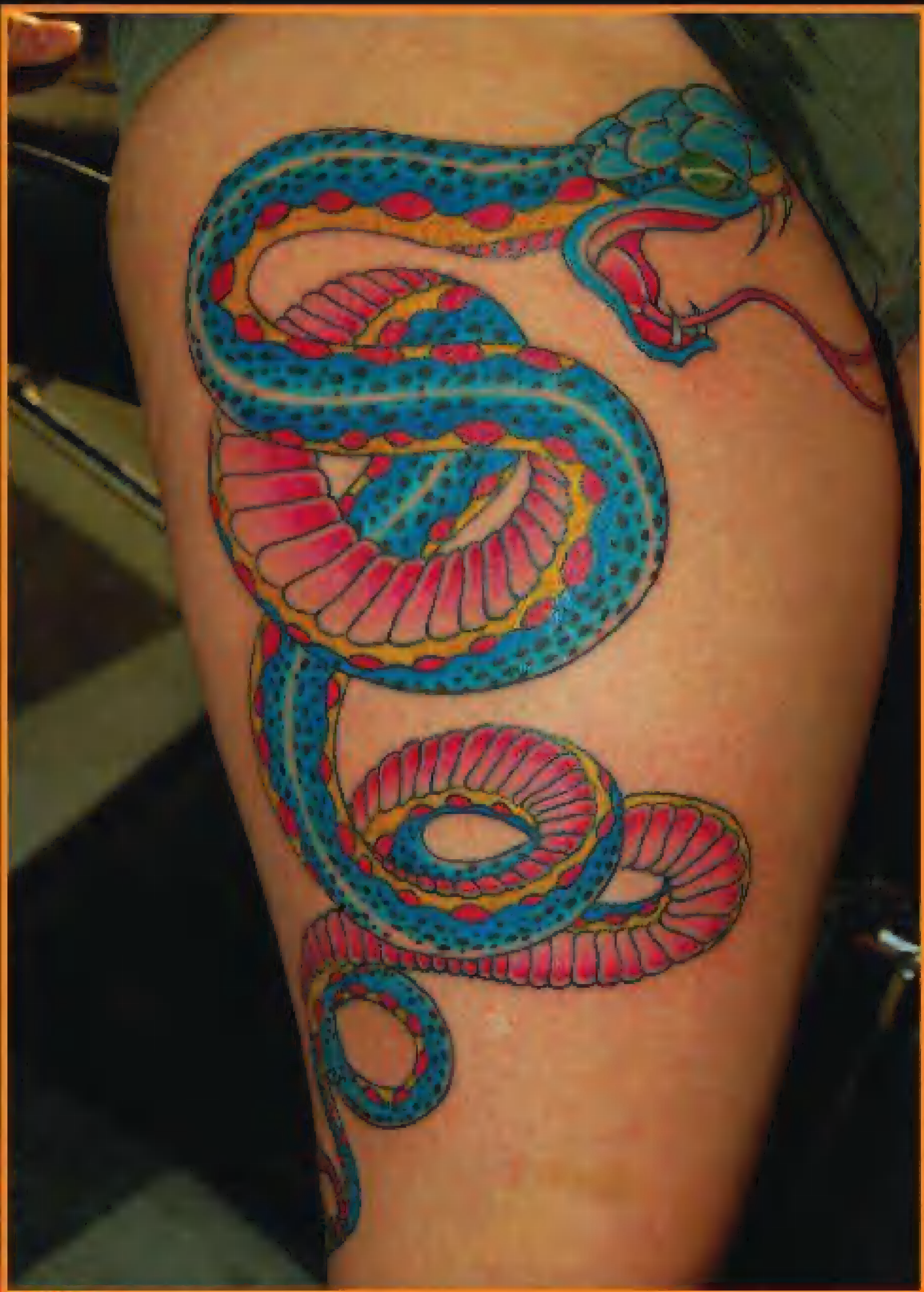
Anyone who encounters Johnny Two-Thirds is likely to be certain of one thing; he still has much to bring to the tattoo world. "God willing, I'll tattoo till the day I die," he said. "My wife asked me how I envision retirement and I said five days a week tattooing instead of six. I really love what I do."

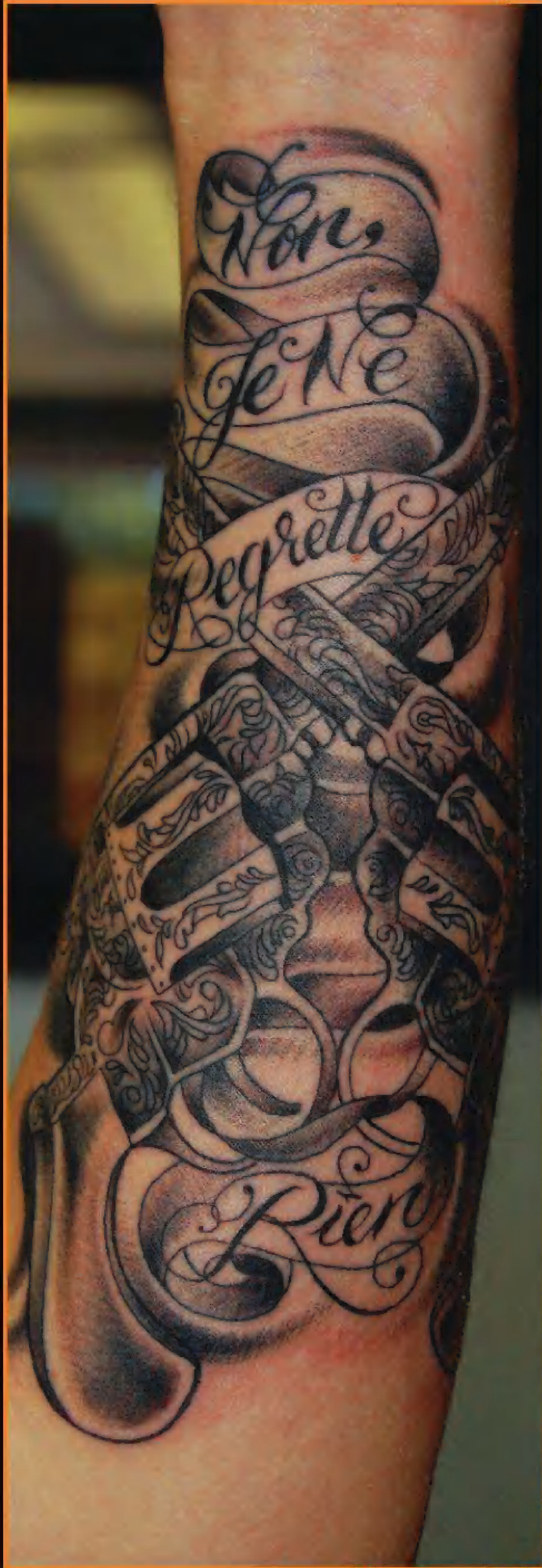
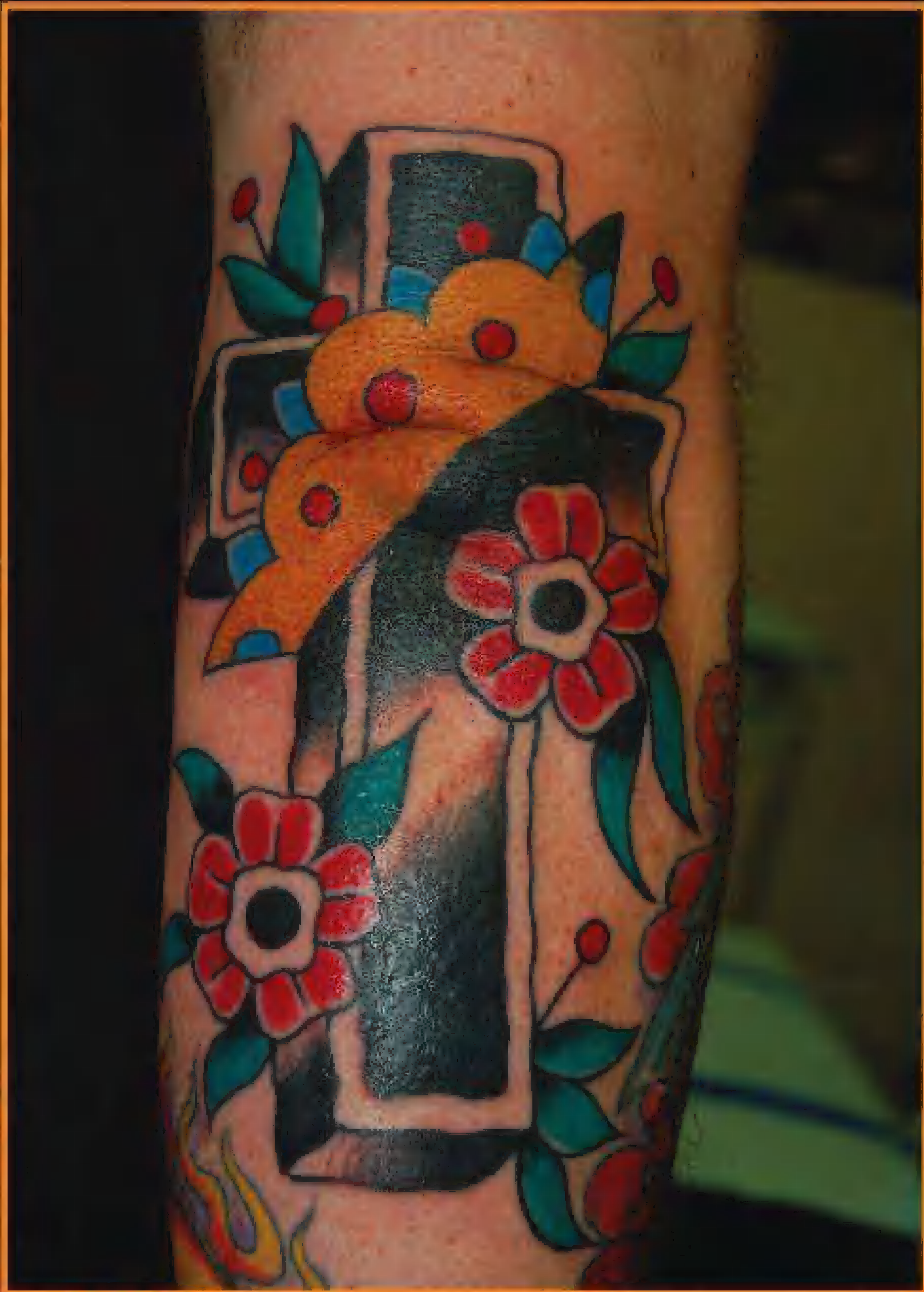
Johnny Two-Thirds can be found at Yer Cheat'n Heart Tattoo in Gardena, California, (310) 329-7552 and soon at Hermosa Tattoo Company in Hermosa Beach, California, (310) 318-8980. He can also be tracked down on Facebook, where you'll find him as Johnny Anderson, or on the Johnny Two-Thirds Facebook fan page. 





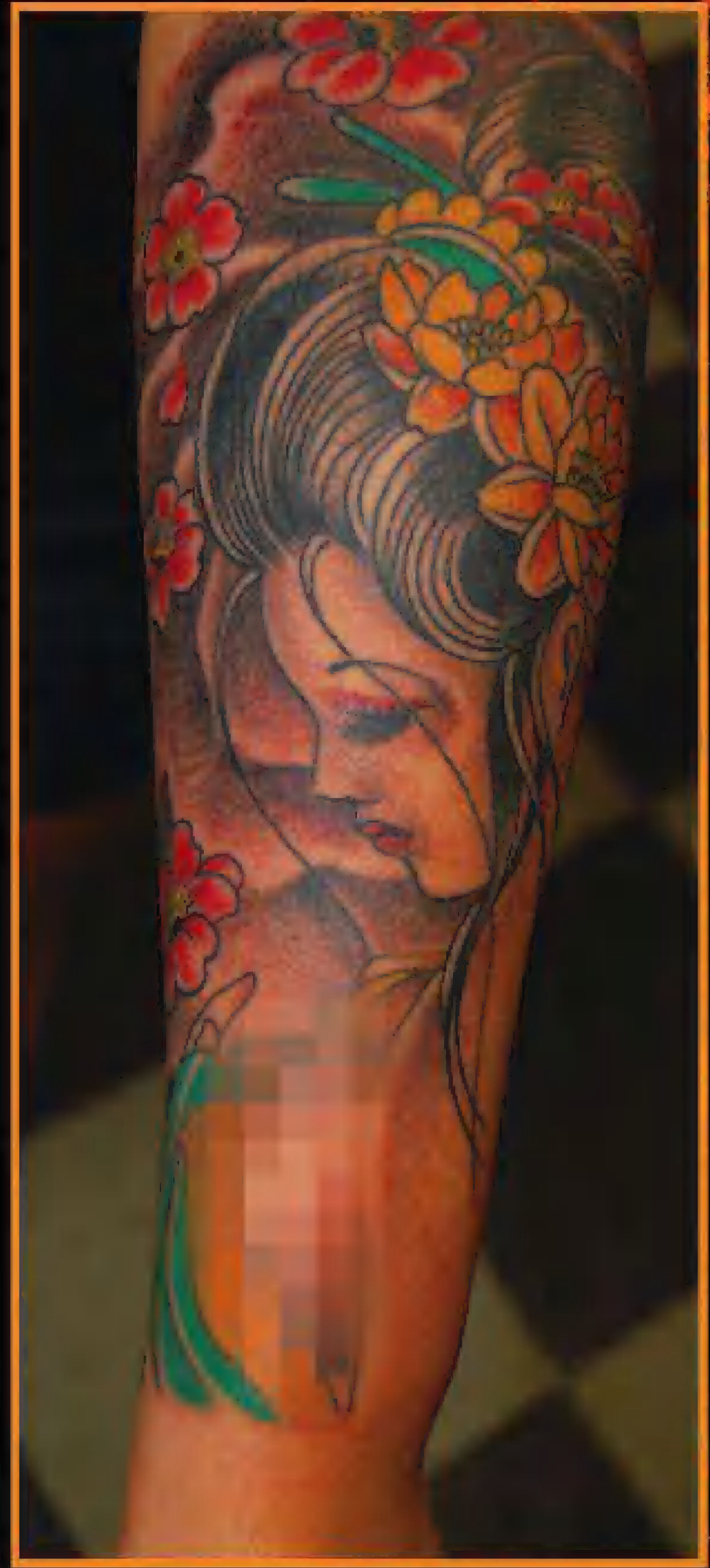
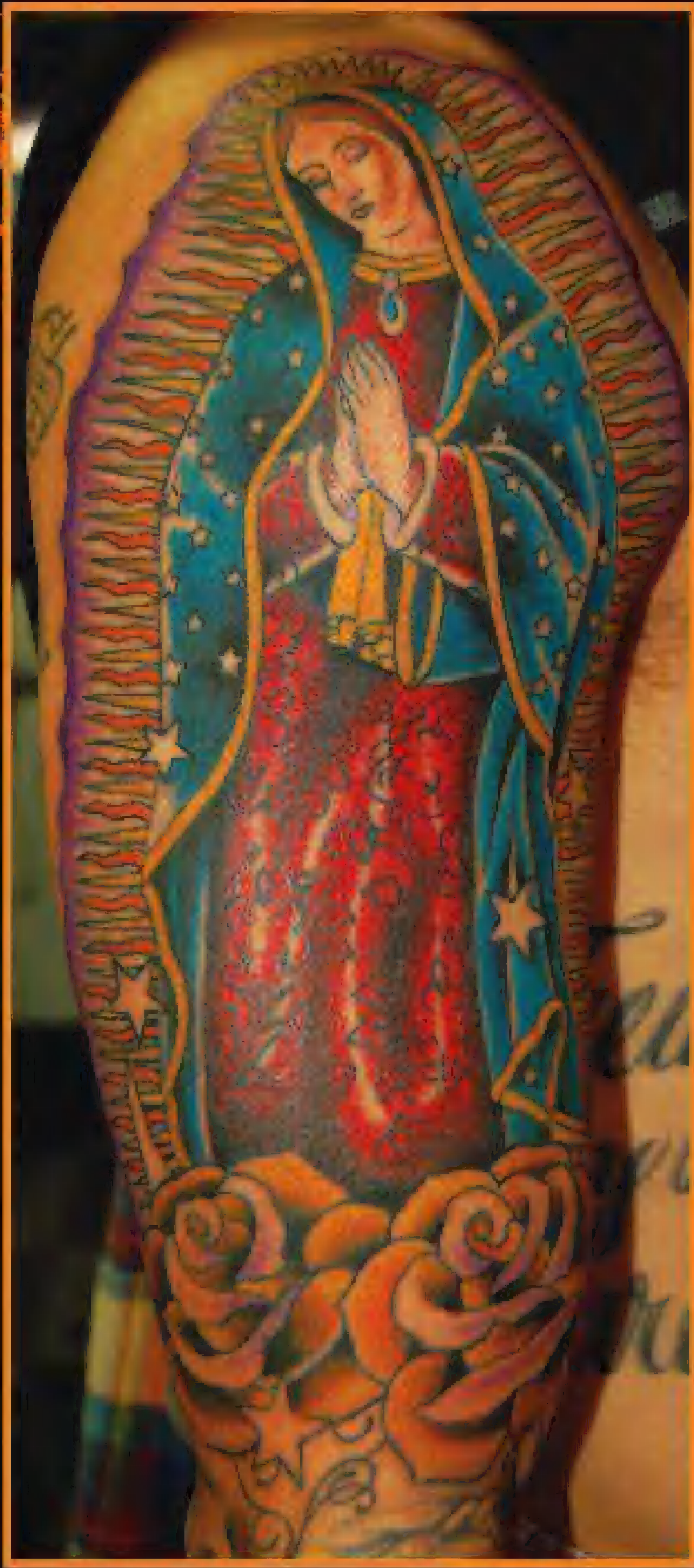








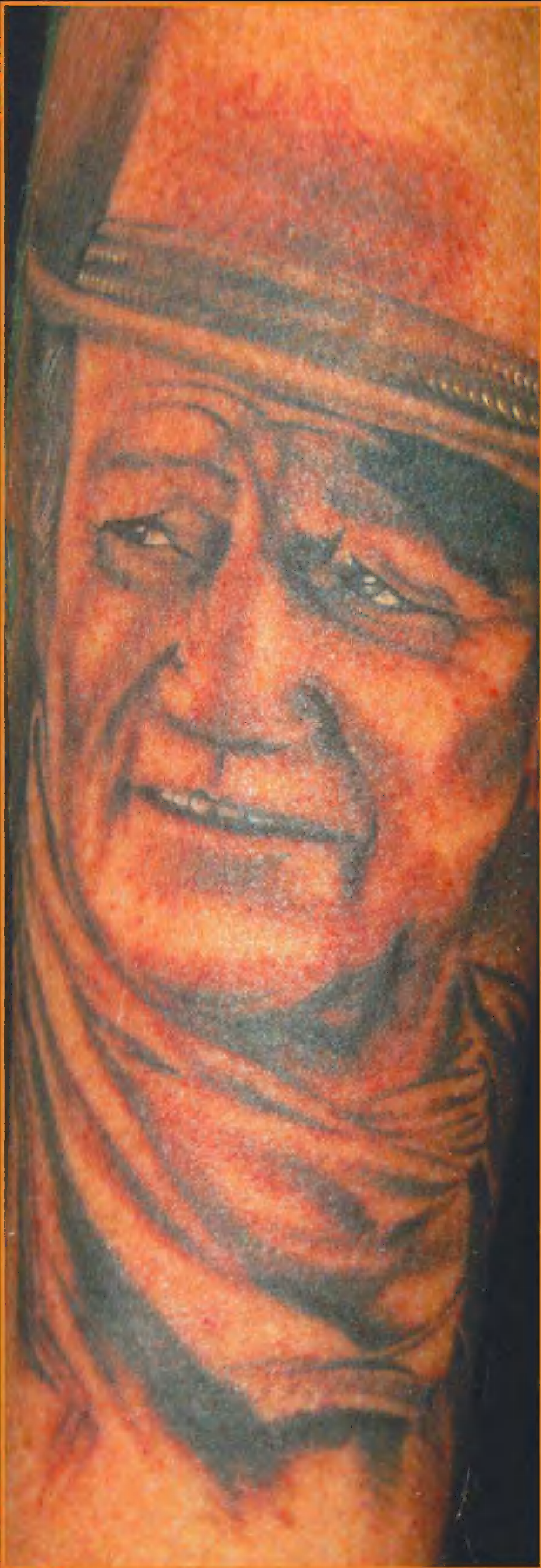












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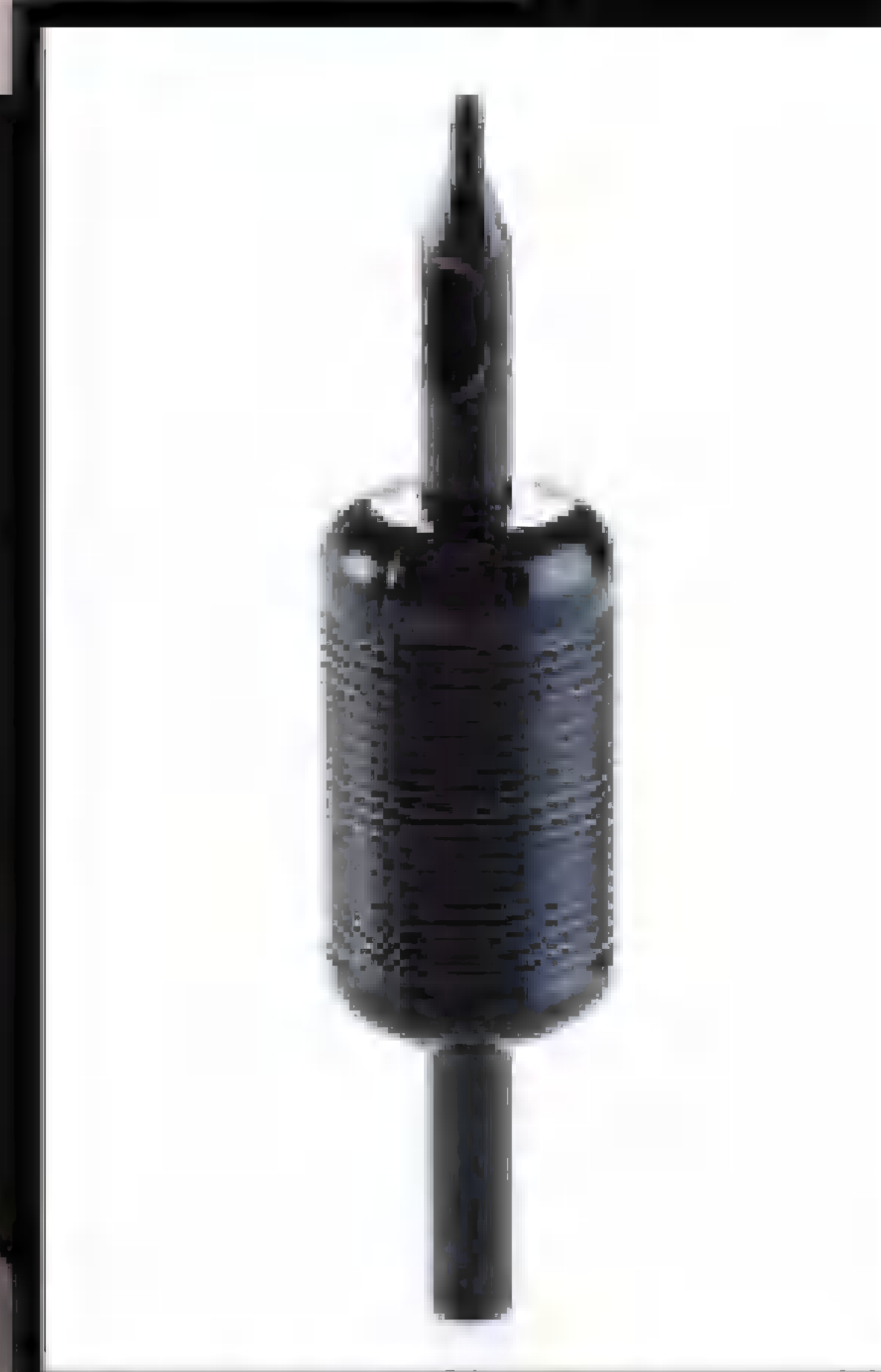
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IN A HANDBASKET HELL CITY KILLUMBUS



Photos by Bill DeMichele Story by Shannon

Columbus, Ohio is like the poster child for Middle America flyover cities. It does have high spots, though. Columbus is home to Ohio State University, the largest university in the Western world. It also has a thriving tattoo and arts community. Finally, for the last 11 years, Columbus has pried open the fiery, slaving jaws of Hell to admit the committed to the Hell City Tattoo Fest.

Hell City is at the tip-ass uppermost end of the convention scale. It started out way back when on a high note and never dipped down. This is due entirely to the seething, bubbling brain of host Durb Morrison.

In 2010, Durb said, "We had the best year of The Hell City Tattoo Fest so far, with more attendees and events than ever before. It's spawning larger every year."

Durb applied a basic principle to show planning. As a longtime veteran convention-goer himself, he set up Hell City to provide both vendors and guests with everything the way he himself would have wanted it when he was in their places. No expense is spared in making the Killumbus event a standout weekend.

A Killumbus native, Morrison knows the local turf. He chose a venue that might as well have been created specifically for a tattoo show—the downtown Hyatt Regency. Along with its cast ballroom, the hotel offers a



Artists: Josh & Jamy Carlton, and various artists

HELL CITY



Artist: Miguel



Artist: Pete Carreno

K I L L U M B U S

lot of smaller rooms that various Hellions make use of for things like the art gallery, cinema and seminars. Of course there was a full compliment of tattoo contests every day, with the awards being handed out by the darling, daring and delightful Suicide Girls.

The results of Durb's planning and providing are borne out every year at both Hell City Columbus and the newer Phoenix show. For many tattooers, it's the only show they attend all year. And guests vote their approval by showing up in droves. "All of the Hellions are really dedicated to the fest and come every year for one Hell of a good time," Morrison said.

Among the artists working the floor at the 2010 Hell City event were Dave Lukeson & Sean Karn, Clic Collective, VA; Juan Salgado, Under Skin Tattoo Corp, Puerto Rico; Kari Barba & Jeremiah Barba, Outer Limits, CA; Lenny Renken, Nick Kelly, Big Brain Omaha, NE; Josh Payne, Art Fuel Inc., NC; Anthony Orsatti, Inkorporated, Alberta, Canada; Toxyc, Last Rites Gallery, NY; Megan Hoogland, Leviticus Tattoo, MN; Dave Sanchez, Yer Cheatn Heart, CA; Johnny Thief & Matt Lukesh, Seppuku Tattoo, GA; Josh Woods, Steve Martin, Ian White, Marty McEwen, Black 13, TN; Ryan Hadley & Timothy Boor, Ryan Hadley Studio, IN; Frank Lanatra, Eternal Custom Tattoo Studio, FL; Phil Garcia, Inkphiller Tattoo, CA; Jess Yen, MyTattoo, Japan & Taiwan; Lucy Hu, My Tattoo, CA; Sean Herman & CW, Royal Street Tattoo, AL; Brando, Matt Jones, Siege, Oz, Stay True Tattoo, AZ; George Galindo

& Erick Melendez, House Of Pain, TX; Eric James, Pete Vaca, Fritz Andrews and Marko Au, Phoenix Tattoo Co., AZ; Marvin Silva, Empire State Studios, NY; Christian Perez, Hope Gallery, CT; Myke Chambers, Austin Tattoo Company, TX; Megan Massacre, Deep Six Labs, PA; Tim Pangburn, Art Machine Productions, PA; Tony Carey & Kenny Meleleu, Hold Fast Tattoo, AZ; Alexander Schultz & Eric Van Dyk, Slave To The Needle, WA; Kelly Doty & Tim Senecal, Off The Map Tattoo, MA; Scot Winskye, Inkwell Tattoo, KY; Keith Ciaramello, Kustom Kulture, NY; Anthony Dubois, Stained Skin, OH; Matt Dinovo, DiNovo Tattoos, NE; Kristel Oretto, Crimson Anchor, FL; Chris Stuart, Tommy McCarter & Skinny Bagwell, Ace Custom Tattoo, NC; Phil Robertson, Classic Tattoo, OH; Muriel, Zao Tattoo, AZ; Adrian Dominic, Coil Gallery, CA; Nick Baxter, Nick Baxter Tattoos, TX; Sage, Urban Art, AZ; Jonathan Montalvo, Montalvo Tattoos, FL; Kelly Gormley, Addictive Ink, NM; James Vaughn, Straight A Tattoo, NC; Oak Adams & Daniel Walker, Painted Temple, UT; Mathew Clarke, Midnight Moon Tattoo, NH; Meg McNeil & Danny Ross, Love & Hate Tattoo, AZ; Carl Grace & Joshua Hagan, Sacred Art Tattoo Studio, AZ; Robert Pho, Skin Design Tattoo; Dave Kruseman, Forever Yours Tattoo Gallery; Larry Bone, Tattoo-A-Go-Go, LA; Sean Peters, Eclectic Art, MI; Philip Corbin, Josh Paul & Tyler Sloan, No Regret Tattoo, TX; Phillip Spearman, Inkworks Tattoo, CA; Marshall Bennett, Eternal Tattoos, MI; Steve Soto & John Caleb, Goodfellas Tattoo Art & Design

HELL CITY



Artist: Dave Sullivan




Artist: Josh & Jamy Carlton

K I L L U M B U S

Studio, CA; John Montgomery, Tattoo Syndicate, CA; Joshua Carlton, Great American Tattoo Company, IN; Monte, Artistic Skin Designs, IN; Mick Squires, Korpus Tattoo, Australia; Josh Duffy, Jeff Johnson, London Reese & Katelyn Crane, MD Tattoos, CA; Jason Holley, A Stroke Of Genius Tattoos, FL; Mike Cole, Mike Cole Art, CA; Dave Barton & Nathan Kostechko, Coil Gallery, CA; Brad Mariachi, Machete Tattoo, CA; Karyn Pratt, Lucky Draw Tattoo, AZ; Mario Rosenau, Tim McEvoy & Aric Taylor, Art Junkies Tattoo, CA; Big Gus, Demented Image, CA; Aaron Coleman & Mando, Immaculate Tattoo, AZ; Miguel Uzi & Josh Palmer, Hard Luck Tattoo, CA; Mark Phillips, Trust Tattoo, CA; Dub Weir, Tony Goeke, Ryan Campbell & Bruce Rivera, Divinity Tattoo, AZ.

You can get the gory details about the 2011 Hell City shows at www.hellcity.com.

The Columbus event will skip 2011, but Phoenix is going to happen. Be there or be square. 



Artist: Johannes Nota



HELL CITY



Artists: Jason Aloha, Rob Wetzel, Brad Rouse

K I L L U M B U S



Artist: Tony Klett

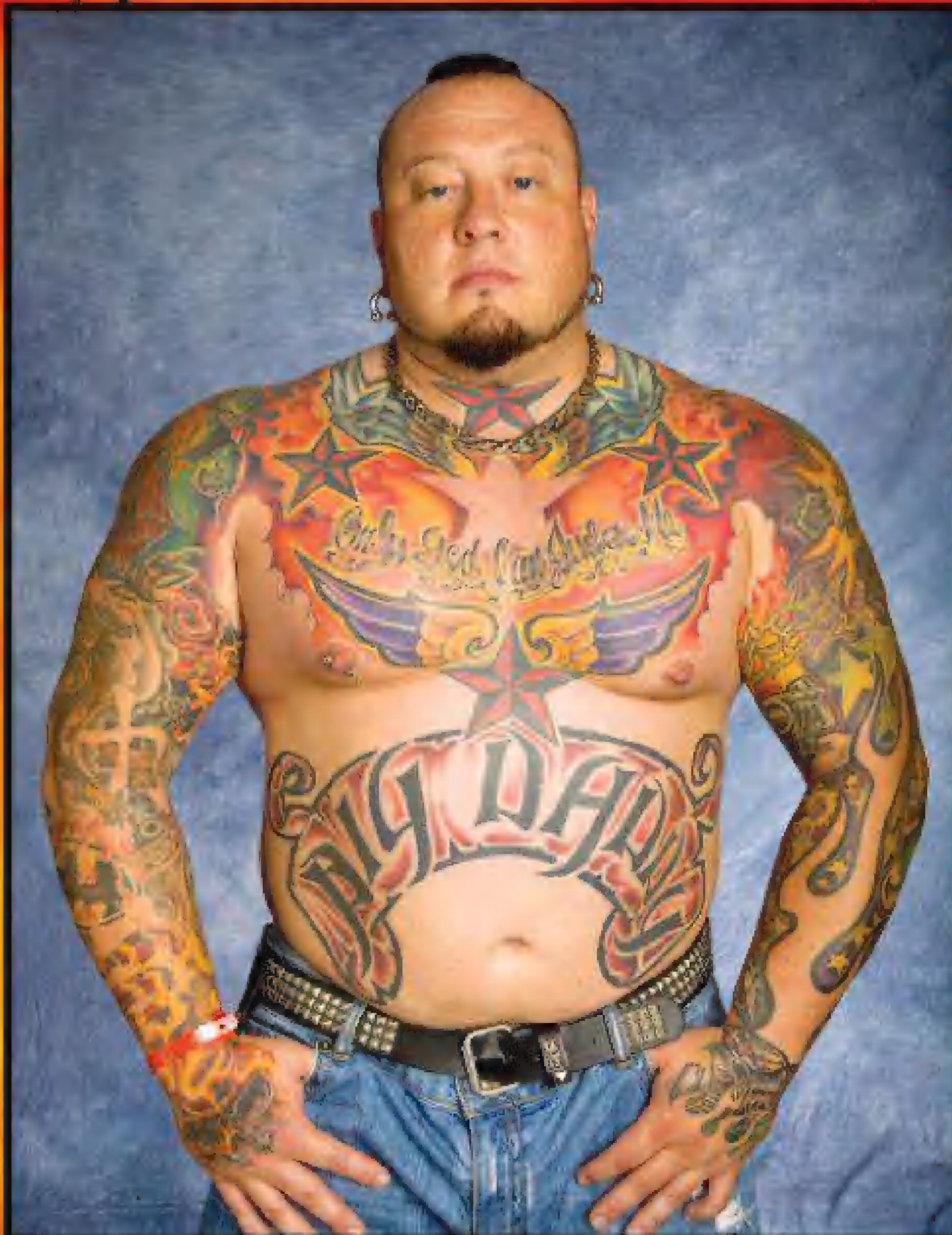


Artist: Brian Randal

HELL CITY



Artist: Chad Sinkhorn



Artist: Scot Winski

K I L L U M B U S



Artist: Chad Sinkhorn



Artist: Scot Winski

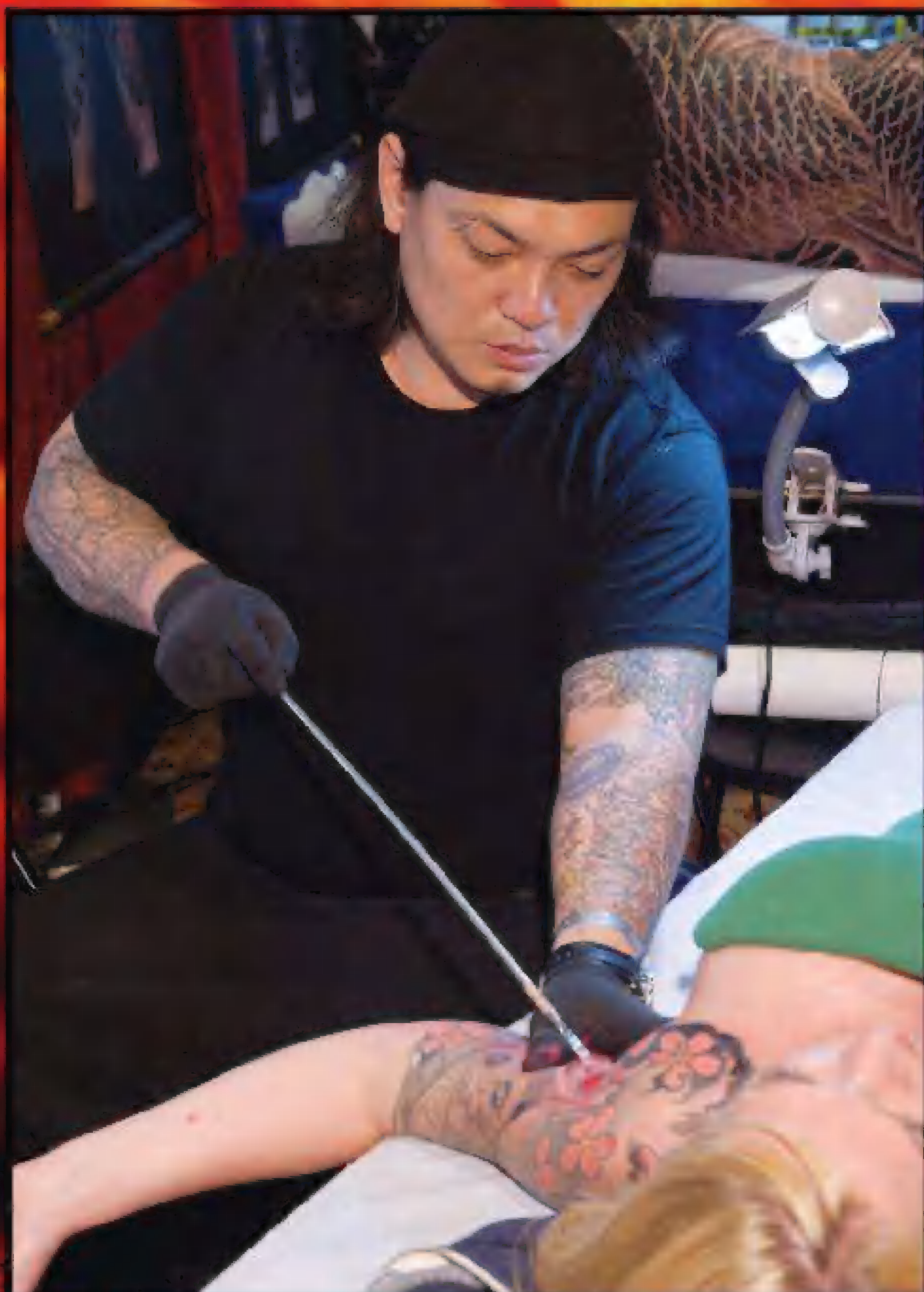


Artists: Patrick Shackley, Brendan Rowe, Jae Audette



Artist: Unknown

K I L L U M B U S



Artist: Unknown



Artist: Chris Sanders



K I L L U M B U S



Artist: Chris Sanders



Artist: Chris Sanders

HELL CITY



Artist: Dan Henk



Artist: Dan Henk

K I L L U M B U S



Artist: Dan Henk



Artist: Dan Henk



Artist: Unknown



Artist: Unknown

K I L L U M B U S



Artist: Rob Wetzel



Artist: Jeff Ensminger

HELL CITY



Artist: Ken Lewis



Artist: Ken Lewis

K I L L U M B U S



Artist: Dan Wulff



Artist: Ken Lewis

HELL CITY



Artist: Durb Morrison



Artist: Kevin Stress

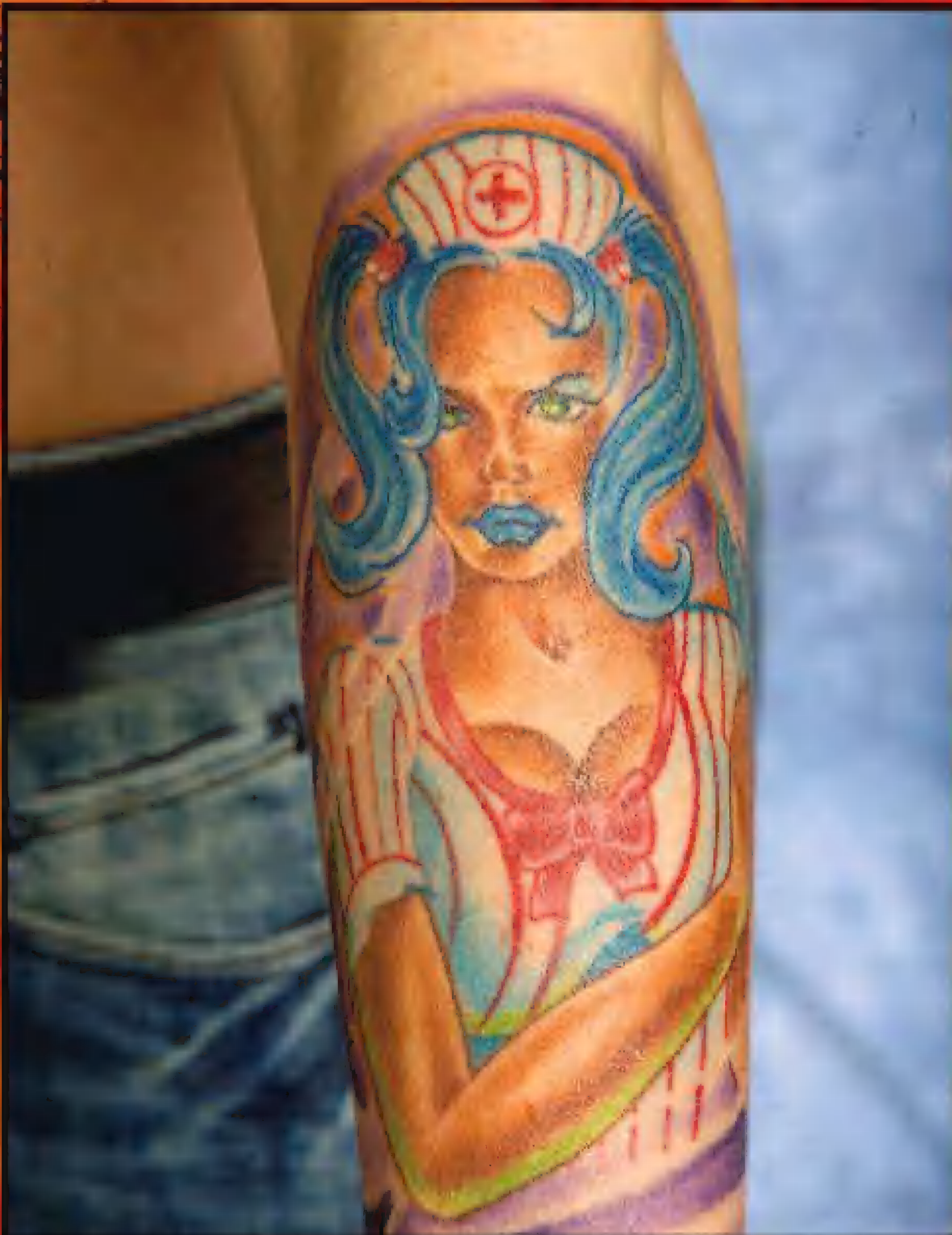
K I L L U M B U S



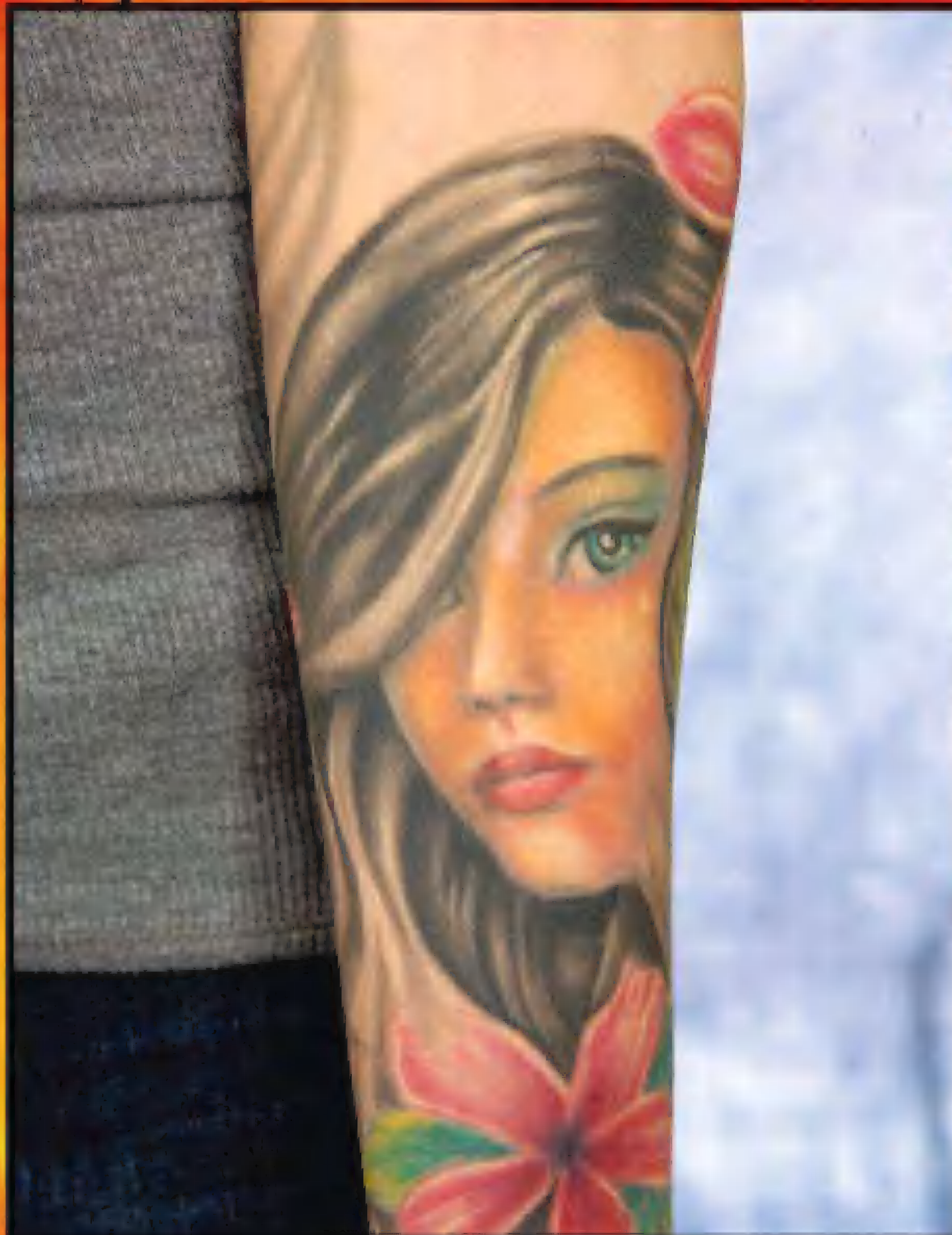
Artist: Chad Sinkhorn



HELL CITY



Artist: Chad Sinkhorn



Artist: Rob Wetzel

K I L L U M B U S



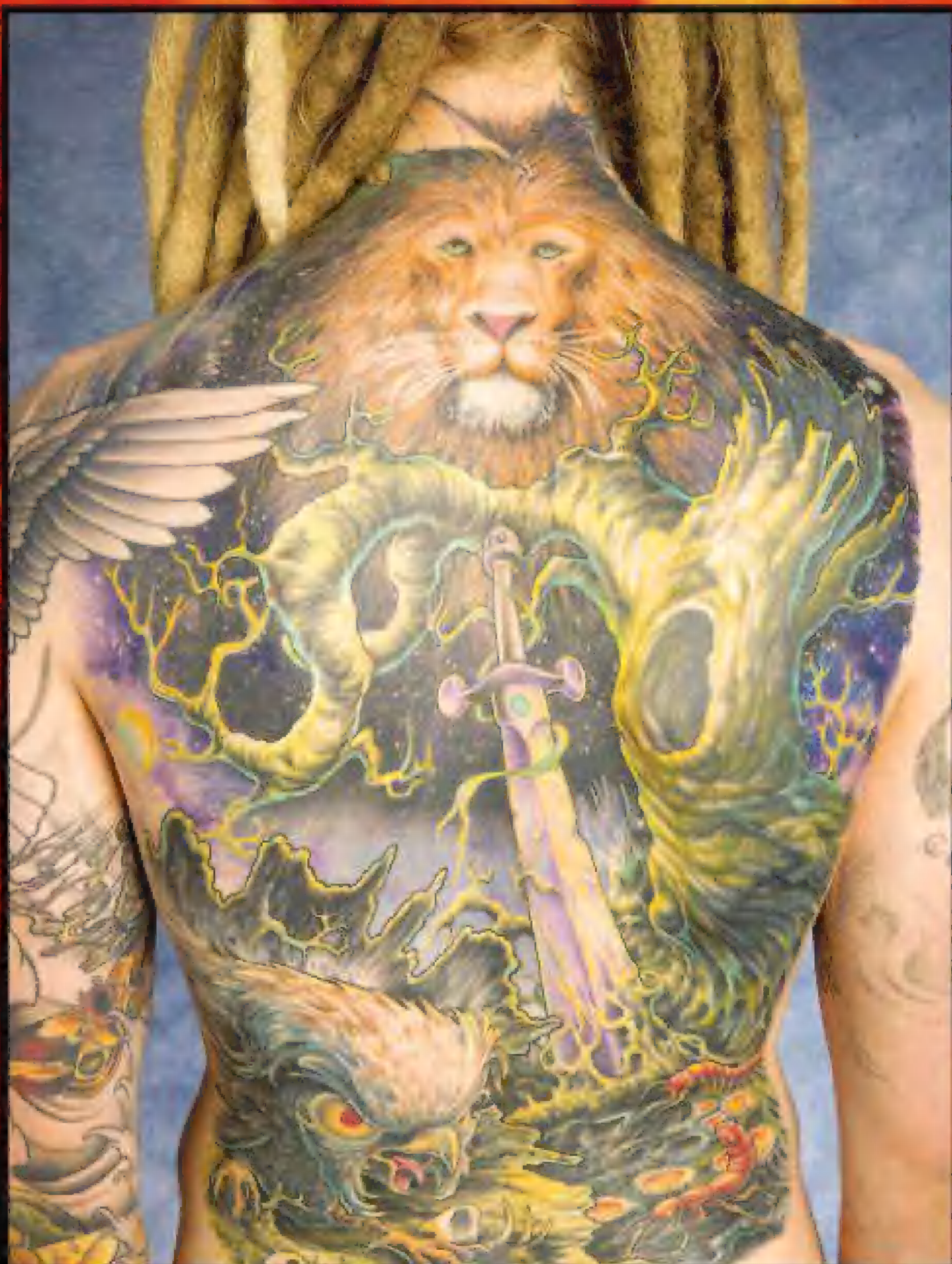


Artist: Joshua Carlton



Artist: Joshua Carlton

K I L L U M B U S



Artist: Unknown



Artist: Joshua Carlton

HELL CITY



Artist: Unknown

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Artist: Unknown



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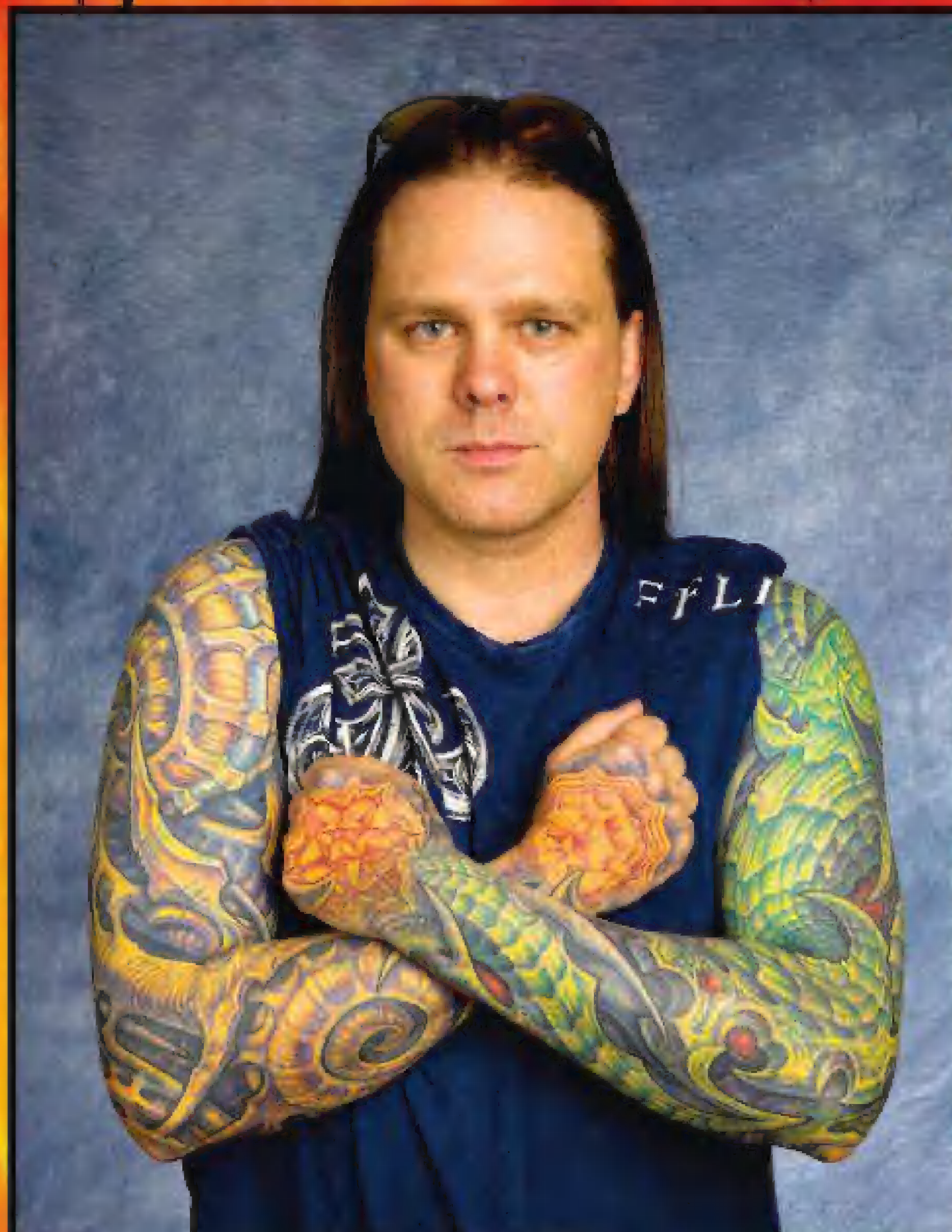


Artist: Unknown



Artist: Unknown

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Artist: Guy Aitchison

K I L L U M B U S



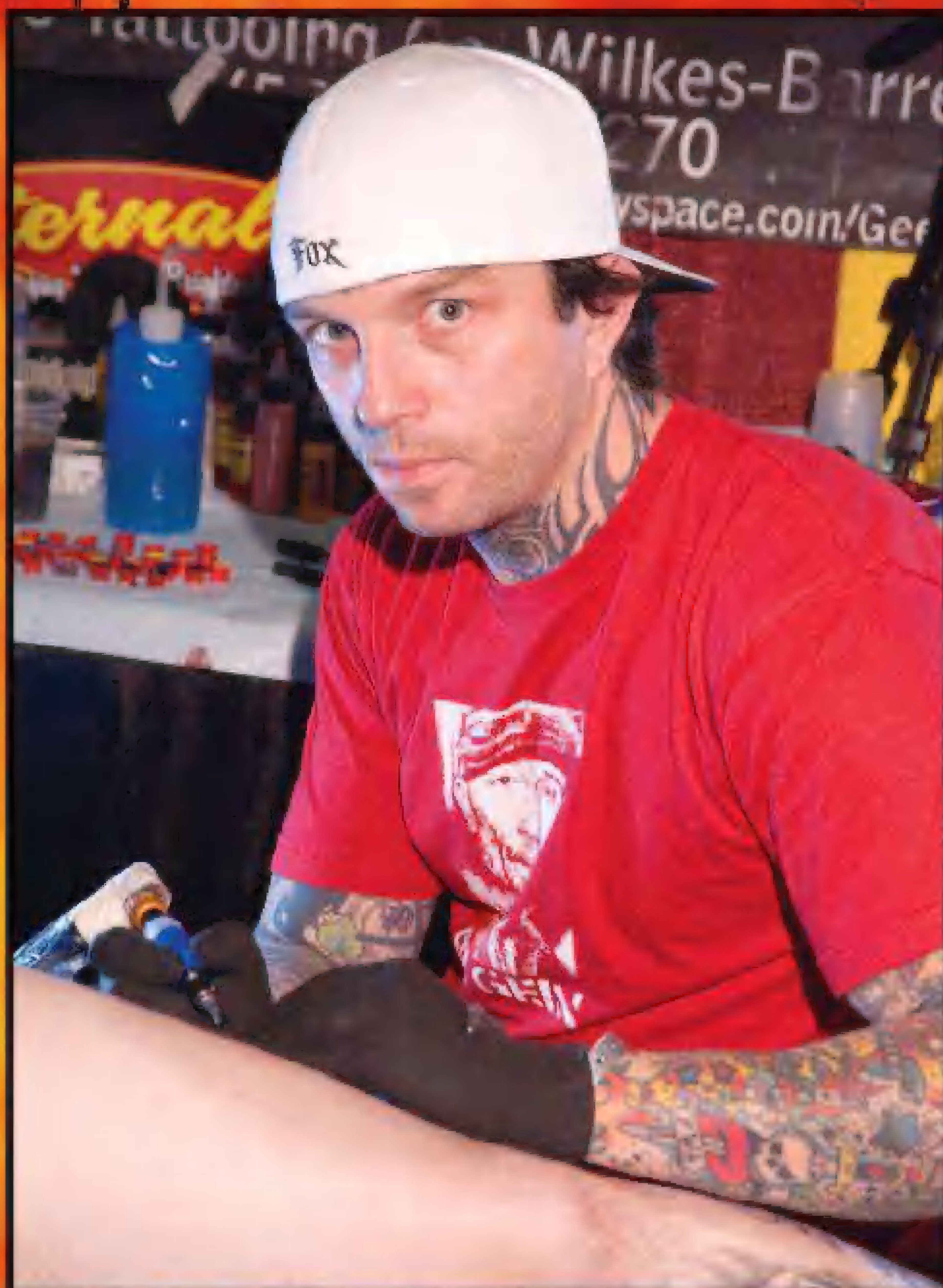
Artist: Guy Aitchison



Artist: Guy Aitchison



Artist: Guy Aitchison



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Artist: Guy Aitchison



Artist: Guy Aitchison

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Artist: Guy Aitchison



Artists: Guy Aitchison, Nick Wiggins

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Artist: Matt Barnett



Artist: Dave Sloan

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Artist: Nick Wiggins



Artist: Guy Aitchison

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Artist: Nick Wiggins



Artist: Guy Aitchison



Artist: Michele Wortman



Artist: Michele Wortman

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Artist: Michele Wortman



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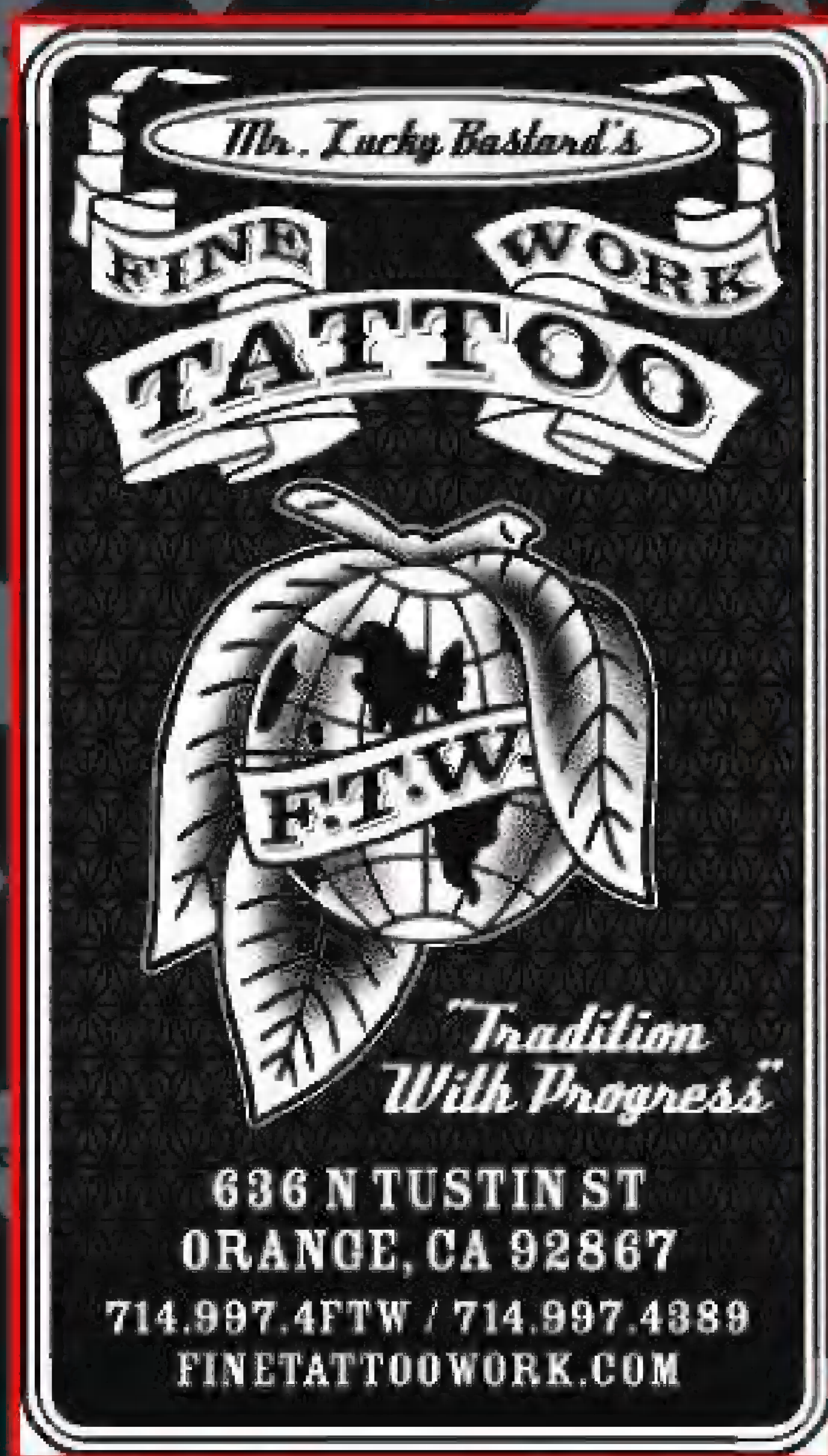
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TATTOOING BY

Aric Taylor

By Amanda Stephan

AT AGE 15, FEW PEOPLE HAVE A TRUE SENSE OF WHAT THEY'LL DO

or who they'll become. For most, their career goals might still be as fantastical as the childhood imaginings of being an astronaut or ballerina. To be 15 and certain of what you want to do for a living and to actually make it a reality is an amazing rarity. Aric Taylor is one such rarity. Not only did he know that he wanted to be a tattoo artist, but he also had the full encouragement of his parents in the immediate pursuit of that goal.

It was Taylor's parents who first introduced him to the world of tattooing. "The first tattoo magazine that I ever looked at was one that my parents had," he said. "On the cover it had a picture of Filip [Leu] and his wife. This was in 1991, and when I read the article there were these pictures of him tattooing when he was like fourteen years old. I was so excited to see that it was possible. His tattoos were so good. That really broke the ice for me. From then on all I wanted to do was look at tattoo magazines. I would always steal them from my parents because they were into tattoos. I still have the first magazine with Filip in it. It's all taped together and beat up, and I still look at it."

Once Taylor decided that he was destined to tattoo, his parents encouraged him to take the next step. "The town I lived in at the time only had one tattoo shop, and my parents were very supportive of it. They wanted me to learn the right way," he recalled. "So, I went in there and I was only like fifteen or so and they would not give me the time of day at first. I would just go every day and bug them and then finally they said they would take me as an apprentice, but they wanted to have a talk with my parents because I was so young." His parents wholeheartedly consented. "So I would go in every day after school, and I would be getting them lunch and mopping floors, cleaning and stuff."

The shop felt that Taylor was not old enough to actually be trained to tattoo, so they found other methods to acclimate him into the profession. They started by instructing him on how to draw flash and how to whip shade





with a ballpoint pen. So that Taylor might grow accustomed to the weight of the tattoo machine, he was made to draw with his pen in the tube vise of his machine. Things seemed to be moving along swimmingly when the shop owners unexpectedly decided to close their doors. With no other shops in the vicinity of his parents' home, Aric was in a predicament.

Fortunately he had heard of a tattooist named Quanna Driver, who worked out of his home. Taylor used his session getting tattooed by Driver as a means to establish a new apprenticeship. Taylor's gumption paid off and his new teacher built on the groundwork that was already laid. He worked with Driver for a year, learning how to make needles, tune his machines, and make a proper stencil, among other things. "My mom and dad let me set up a studio inside their house," he said. "My mother was a dental assistant at the time, so she made sure I had an autoclave and



ARIC TAYLOR

everything was sterile and safe. I even had release forms. This was when I was like seventeen years old."

When he turned 18, Taylor got a job in a tattoo studio. "When I got there I was in way over my head. The first week I was there I was doing like five to like ten tattoos a day. It was a straight street shop and that really taught me a lot working there." Taylor credits his time at that street shop with really teaching him how to draw. Up until that point, he claims he was just a "copy machine," without the ability to draw something from his own imagination. "Tattooing taught me to draw, it forced me to," he said. "After years of tattooing in a street shop you have to be. When someone comes in and they tell you they want a horse eating sushi, flying over New York City or something, you have to be able to produce that or you can just tell them it's a lame idea." Taylor strives to always be able to create what the customer wants.

Taylor spent 10 years working at that studio. While he was there, he met Mike Demasi. When Demasi and his business partners opened Art Junkies Tattoo in Hesperia, he immediately thought of Taylor and offered him a job. Taylor was interested in taking Demasi up on the offer, but wasn't ready to leave the shop that he had called home for so many years. However, several years later when Demasi again asked Taylor to join them at Art Junkies, Taylor accepted. This new artistic environment compelled Taylor to explore new dimensions of tattooing.

Taylor began to devote more time to realistic tattoo. "I think I am so interested in them because when I came to Art Junkies that's all that they did," he said. "I had never seen them done the way that they were doing them. I was really amazed at the level of tattoo work that could be done. I was really hungry to learn when I came to the shop."

Even after the 16 years that he has spent developing as a tattoo artist, Taylor is still hungry for knowledge. "I want to learn everything about tattooing. I mean I would like to do the very best job that I can do for my customers," he said. "Also, I think it keeps things fresh to do different styles, that way you do not get burned out. I can't even tell you how many times I have gotten the Tattoo Blues, and I think every tattooist goes through that."

Nonetheless, Taylor would eventually like to focus on one style and make it his trademark. He greatly admires artists who have the ability to take their own artwork and apply it in every tattoo that they do. "I just want to keep learning as much as I can and keep excelling and maybe one day I can give back what tattooing has given to me. Maybe one day when I feel I can be a good teacher, I can take on an apprentice so I can pass on what I have learned, not only tattooing but the respect and responsibility that goes along with tattooing."

Taylor, who also tattoos under the moniker "The Dark Horse," feels very fortunate that he has a career doing something that he loves. And he is thankful that his artistic success allows him to provide for his family. "I am a father, too," he said, "so I also have the responsibility to love and raise my children and hopefully do as good of a job as my parents did."

To contact Aric Taylor, visit his website www.arictaylortattoo.com.



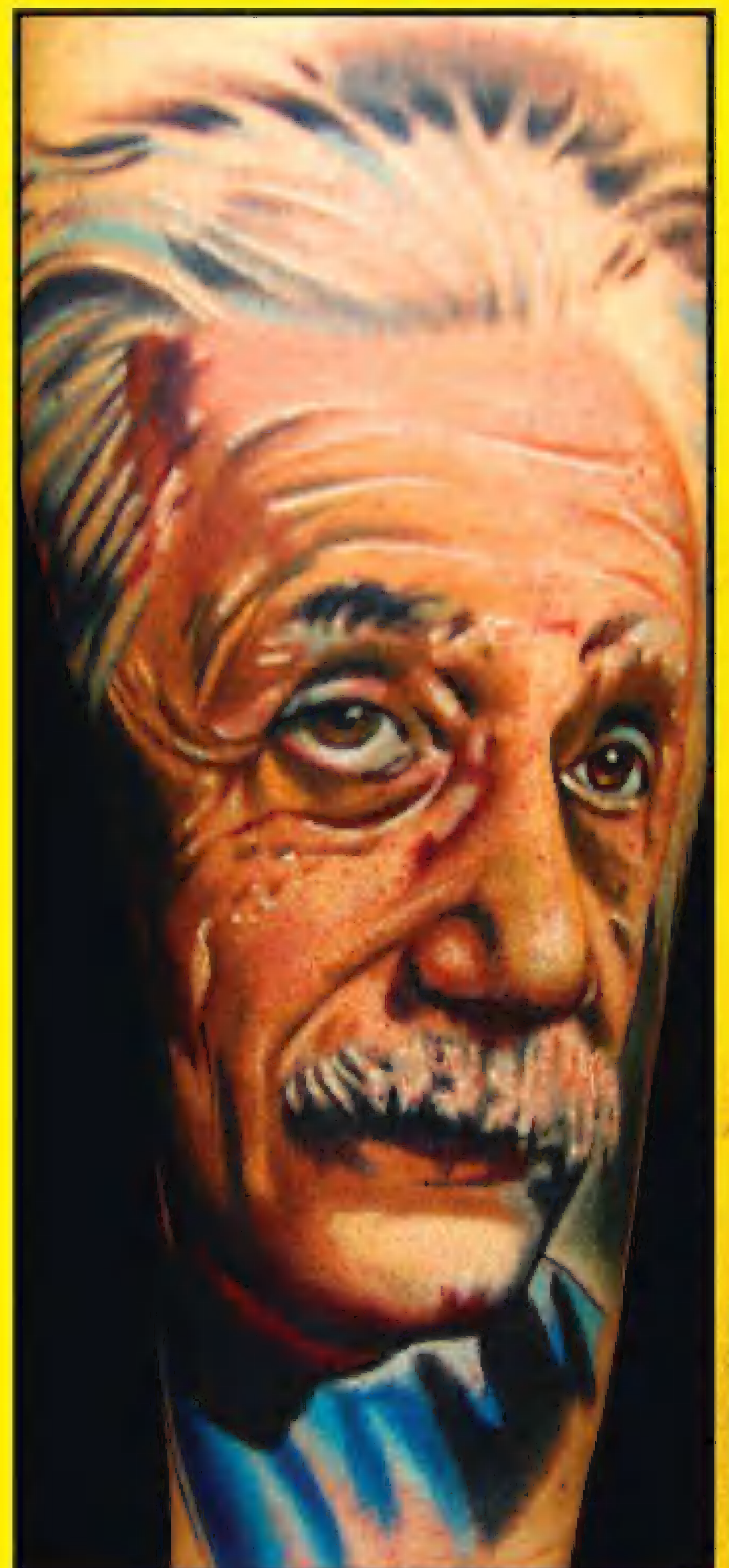
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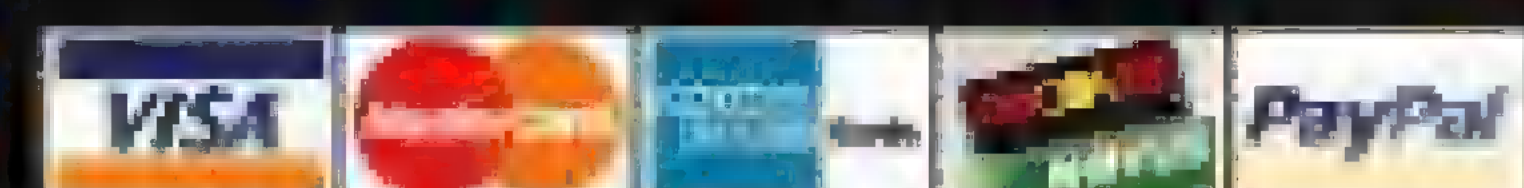


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WHEN CHICAGO WALKED IN TERROR!

SHIVERS! SHOCKS! BEERS!

By Amanda Stephan

THE TATTOO FACTORY GALLERY CELEBRATED THE SEASON OF THE WITCH

with "It's Your Funeral: Art Inspired by Death." It was a group show, which, as always, featured the best talent from around the globe—or, at least, the Tristate area. The Tattoo Factory Gallery is attached to Chicago's Tattoo Factory studio. Owner Paul Collurafici would rather just concentrate on tattooing, so he lets the curators, Beth Cisco and Mitch O'Connell, run free with whatever strikes their fancy. They pick the artists and get out of the way.


For this show, the rush was on. Chicagoans just can't wait to court the reaper. Local talents including Lisa Panghorn, John Mulder, Chema Skandal, Megan Besmirched, Margaret Pesek, Alex Wald, Kymm Chavers, Joey Potts, Jeremy Schuch and many more got themselves into a deceased frame of mind (not that they weren't a little off to begin with) and jolted the bolts on a slew of macabre masterpieces. The theme also attracted members of the Tattoo Factory crew,



with contributions from Cisco herself, Phil Cisco, Alex Higgins, Casey Sass, Cassandra Koch and Bridget Smith.

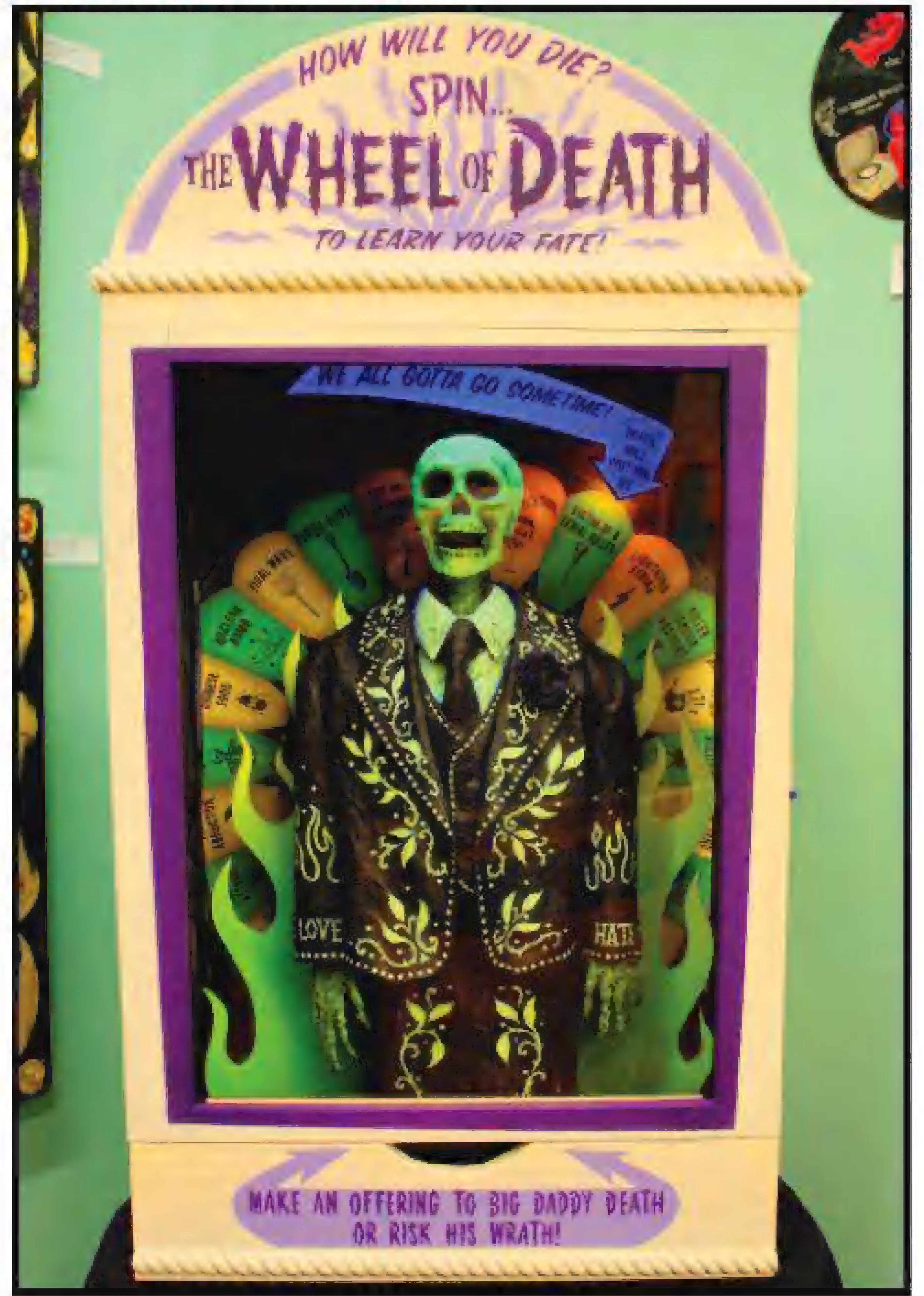
Chicagoans love an excuse to drink beer (thanks PBR!), and art hanging on the walls makes it that much better. As always with shows at the Tattoo Factory, the joint was packed shoulder to shoulder for the five-hour opening party, with an overflow out in the streets. The crowd favorite was Doug Pagacz's "Wheel of Death," an interactive carnival game where you could spin the "How Will You Die" wheel to learn your final fate. Ninety-nine percent of the time it was very painful news: shark attack, alien abduction, civil war reenactment, mass suicide and Chinese food were among the top ways to depart this mortal coil.

Other crowd pleasers were the costumed connoisseurs, including Chucky, Luchadores, Zorro, Princess Brides and more, who gave the horror holiday additional color. The only things not frightening were the art prices, and the gallery was able to scare up a big batch of sales.

At midnight the artists and art lovers joined in a hearty toast. The hardcore continued to wake the Halloween season until about 3 a.m., at which time it passed into history. No tombstone is planned. 

IT'S YOUR FUNERAL: ART INSPIRED BY DEATH





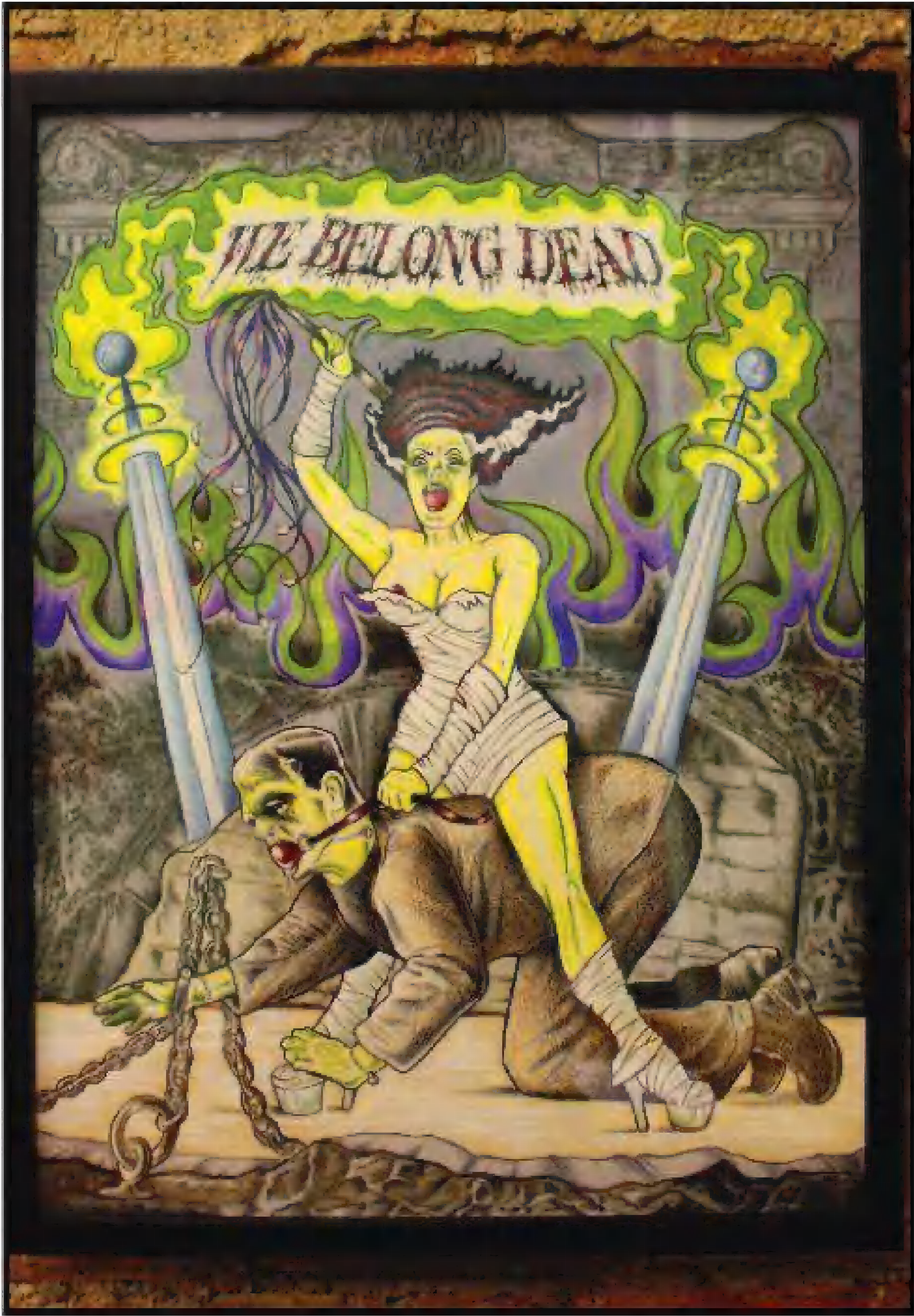
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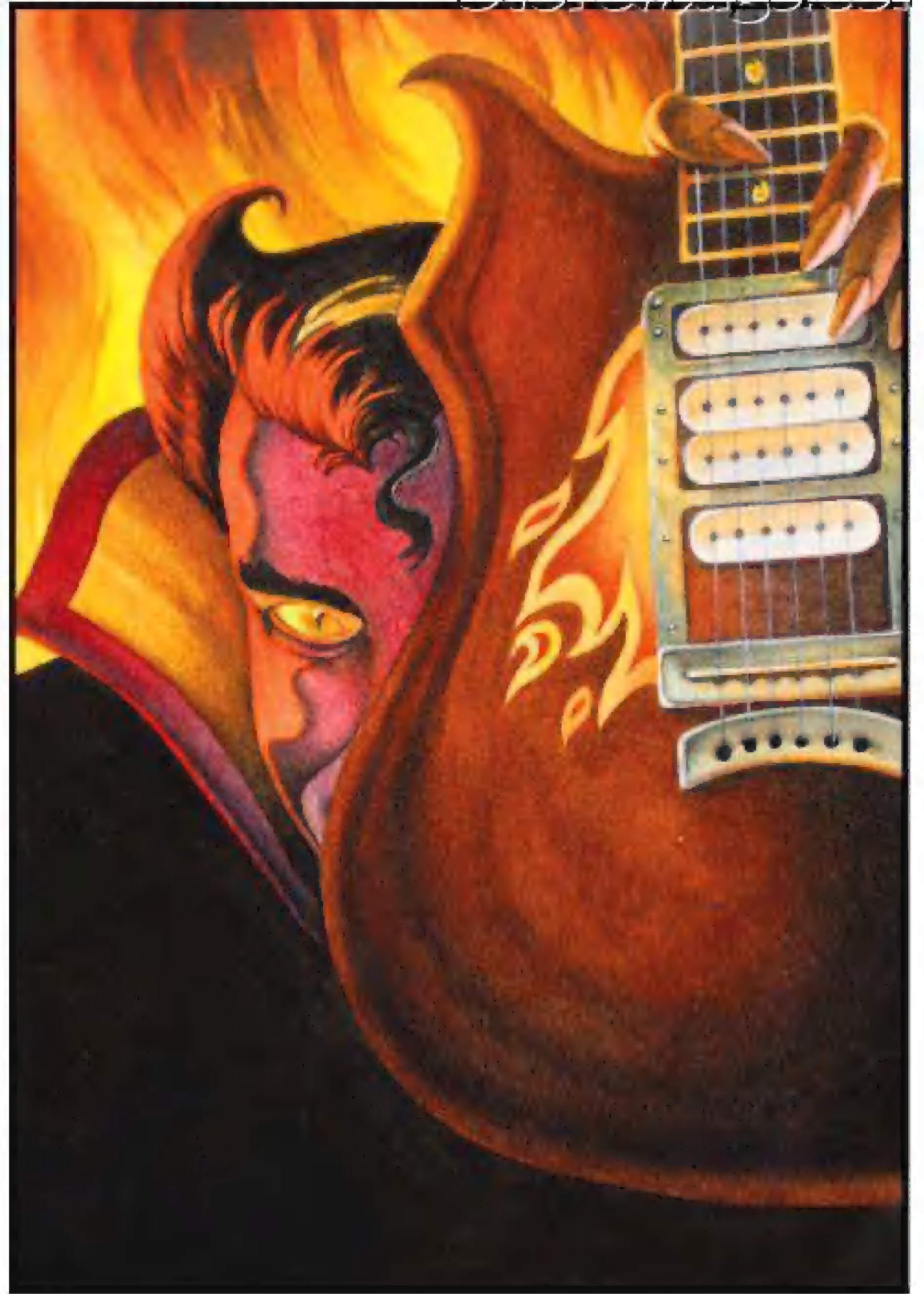


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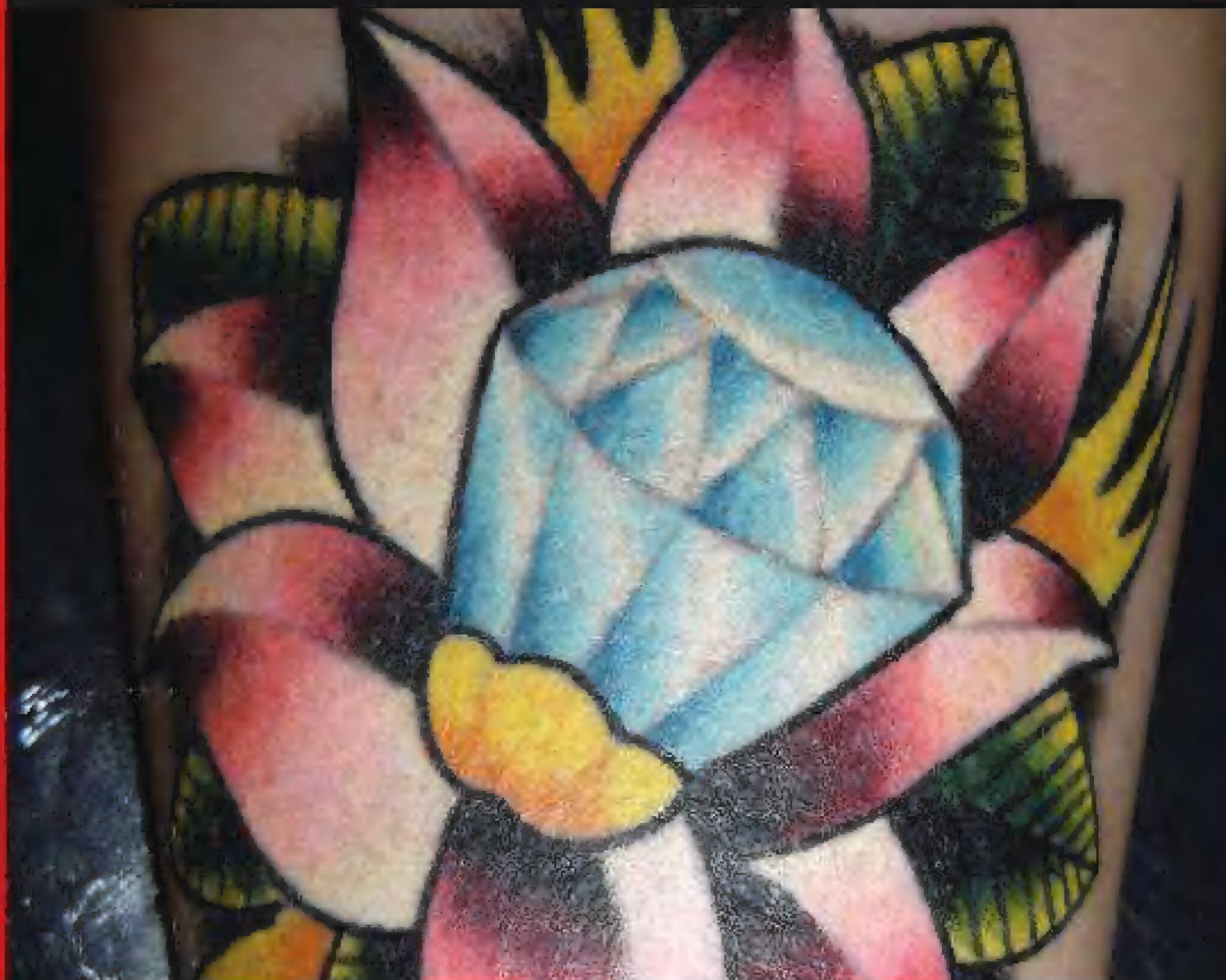
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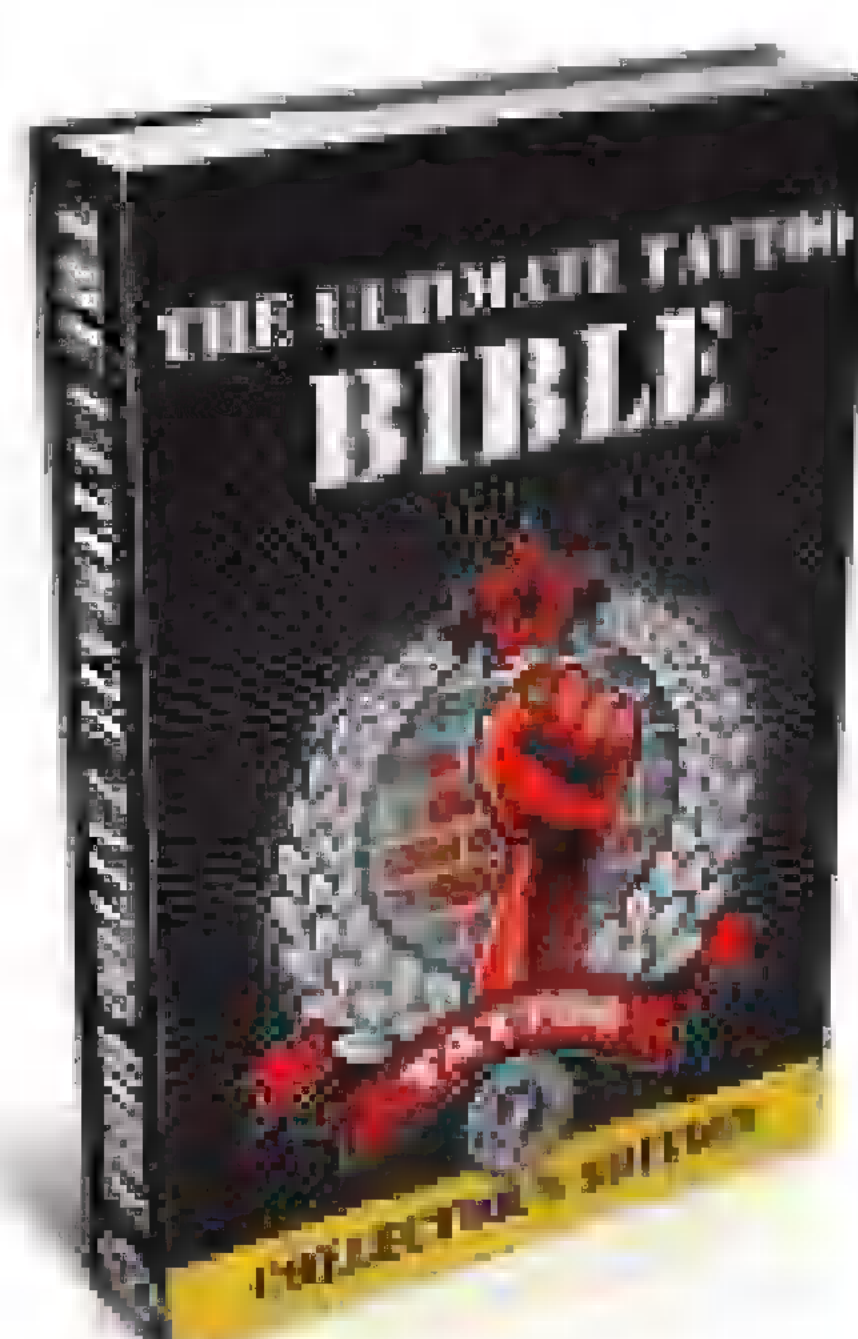
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RAKET NATIVIDAD

THE PHILIPPINES FIRST LADY

By Amanda Stephan

During the last eight years, Raket Natividad has broken a lot of new ground. She is the first female member of the Philippine Tattoo Artists Guild and widely regarded as the first female professional tattoo artist in the Philippines. Natividad also organized The Ink Poetry Tattoo and Rock Festival, the first tattoo convention in her hometown of Laguna. This convention garnered the attendance and respect of highly regarded artists and provided Natividad with an important opportunity to reach up-and-coming artists as well.

Building off of this success, she decided to host Laguna's first tattoo seminar in November of 2009, where she provided attendees with information regarding proper and sanitary tattoo procedures, career development, and tattoo techniques. Her educational program is now in high demand throughout the Philippines, with scheduled seminars in Manila, Davao and Cebu. As Natividad has made progress in her career as a tattooist, she has helped the Filipino tattoo community progress as well.

Based on Natividad's personal history, it's not surprising that she has stepped into the role of educator within the tattoo world. When she began exploring tattooing, she was just 20 years old and the recent recipient of a degree in elementary education. She was required to frequently travel to Manila to review for her teaching license. Every visit gave her a chance to indulge her passion for art. At that time, Manila had an active tattoo scene, but one that was limited to the underground. Once she encountered that scene, she was intrigued and began to spend time at studios in Recto as often as possible. As she absorbed information regarding tattoo tools and





technique, Natividad began to imagine her life following a course that deviated from working only as a teacher and a self-described "model-housewife."

"My first plan was to be a full-time teacher and a part-time tattoo artist," she said. But this plan was one that she kept a secret from her family for some time.

Although Natividad's parents would have wholly disapproved of any plan that included tattooing, her husband Mckus was nothing but supportive. In fact, it was his decision to sell his amp and buy his wife a tattoo kit that enabled her to devote herself to the path for which she was destined. She immediately sought out an apprenticeship, no easy task in the Philippines in 2001, particularly for a woman. But she found Mel Lacanilao, who not only adopted her as a student but has remained a close friend and mentor even after Natividad began to stand on her own. Lacanilao's instruction provided the know-how to lay down solid tattoos, and the confidence and work ethic to bring positive changes to the Filipino tattoo world.

Lacanilao's structured guidance was the optimum environment to bring Natividad's talent to the surface. After only a year, she opened Raket Tattoo Studio in Laguna, bringing her knowledge of artful and sanitary tattooing to the provinces of the Philippines. "I was born here, and I do feel comfortable working in my own community, which is very much next to nature," she said. She also began competing in tattoo competitions throughout the Philippines as the only female tattooist. Since then, she has become a fixture

in the convention scene, accumulating 20 awards, including eight National Champion awards and one International Champion award.

Natividad attends about 12 conventions a year, often acting as a judge in the competitions she once entered as a novice. Perhaps one of her greatest rewards is that she no longer keeps her love of tattoo art a secret from her family. "Now that I'm known as Raket Tattoo, they've got no choice but to be proud," she said, "especially when I receive an award and get featured on television."

Natividad remains modest, even with all of her success in such a short period of time. She claims to only now be developing her own recognizable style. Following in the footsteps of Guy Aitchison, Natividad prefers to work with biomechanical designs. She attributes much of her development as an artist to the study of Aitchison's book. "I love his tattoos and his paintings, combining abstract and realism," she said. "I find his texture, luminosity, and 3-D effect fantastically amazing. I dream of getting a bio-organic backpiece, full of glowing lotus flowers, by Guy Aitchison, of course."

Raket Natividad can be contacted via e-mail at raketattoo@yahoo.com, through Facebook at www.facebook.com/raketattoo, or her website at www.raketattoo.com. You can visit her shop, Raket Tattoo Studio, at 1007 Cailles Street, Santa Cruz, Laguna, Philippines. 📍

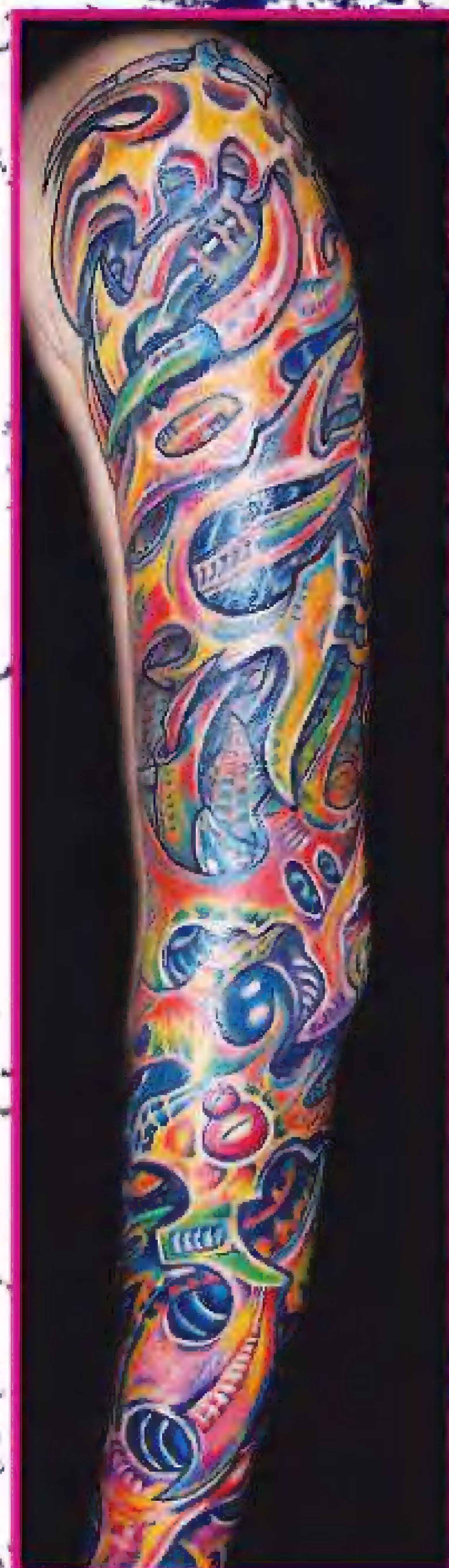












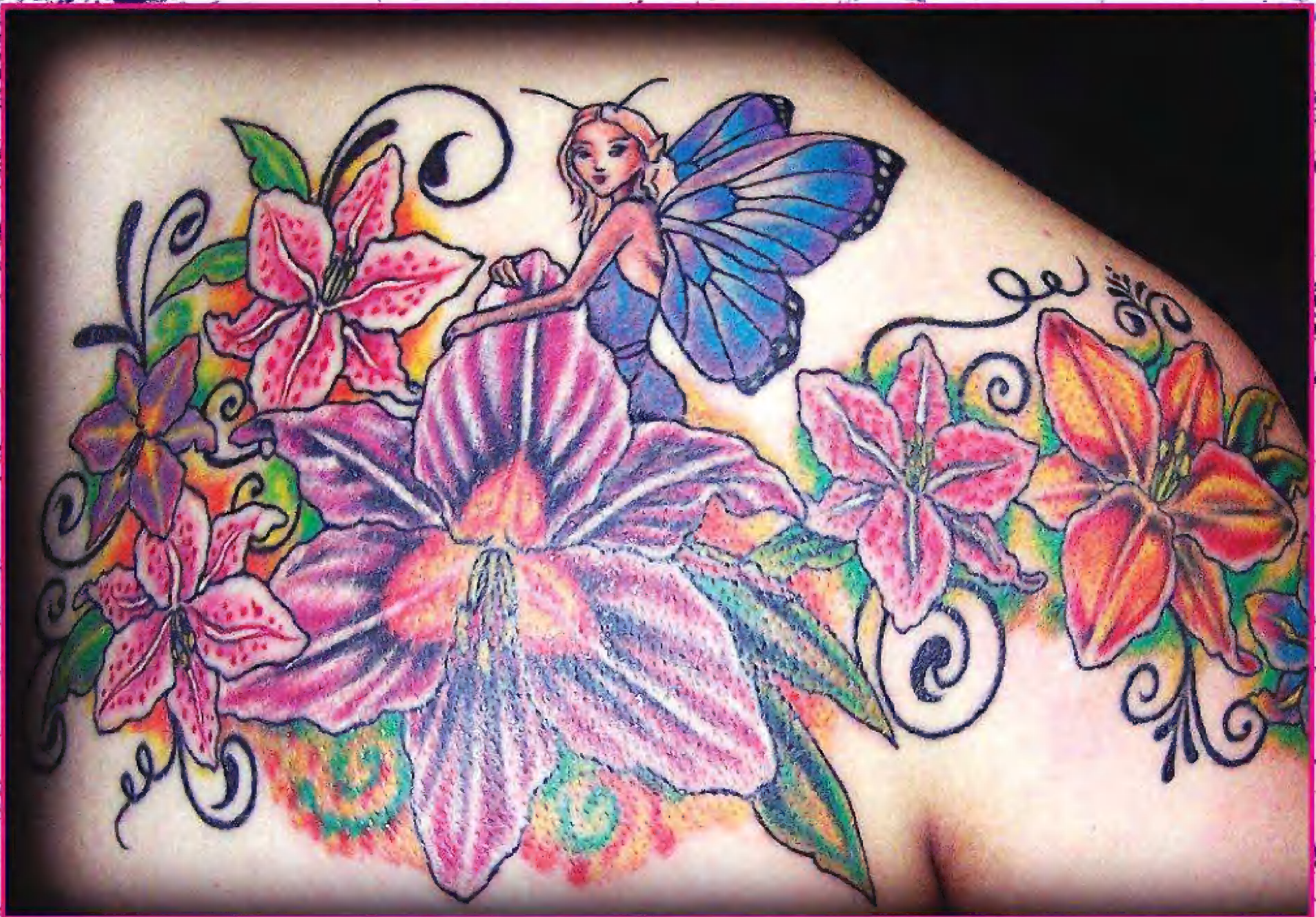


RAKEL NATIVIDAD





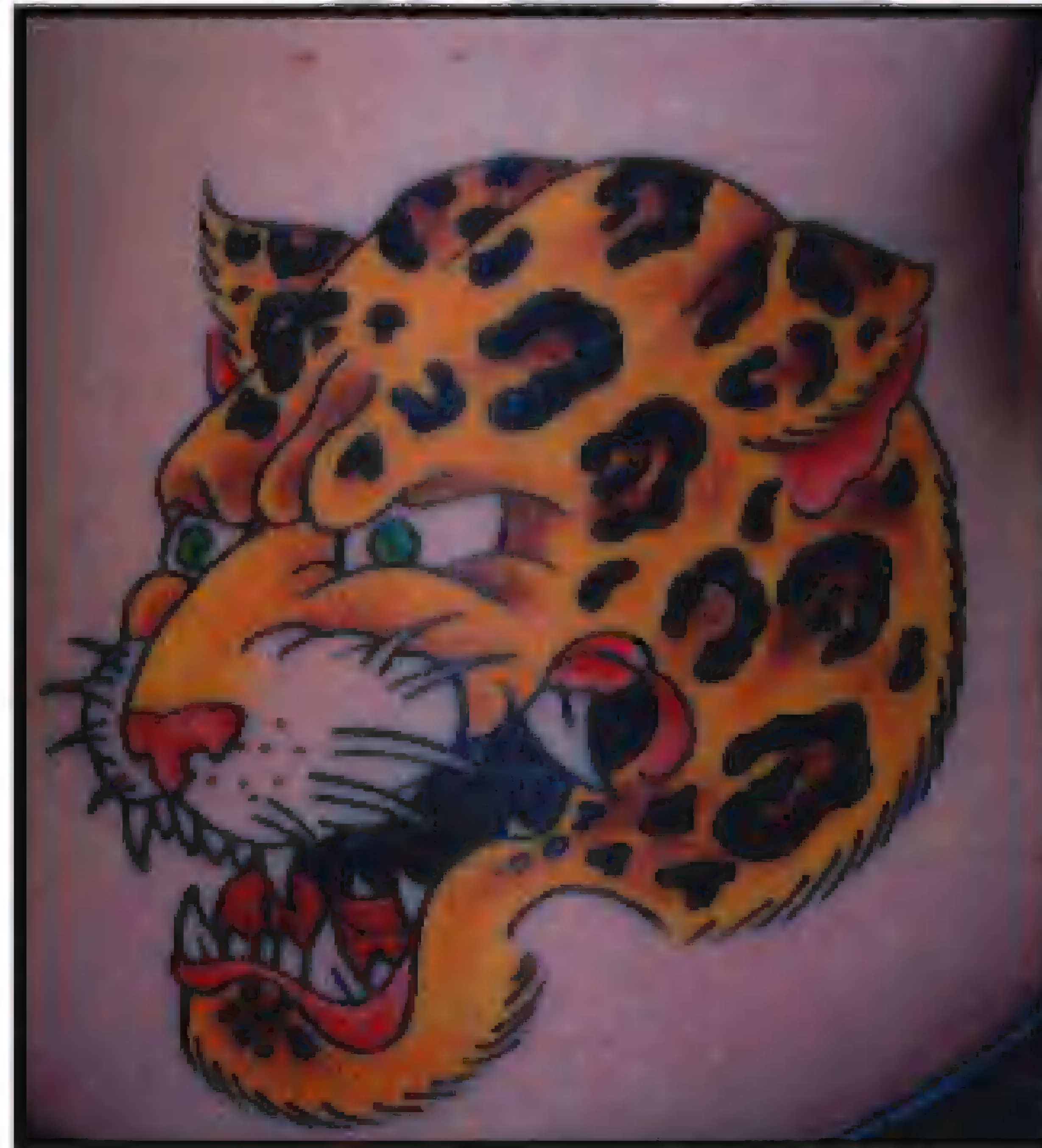




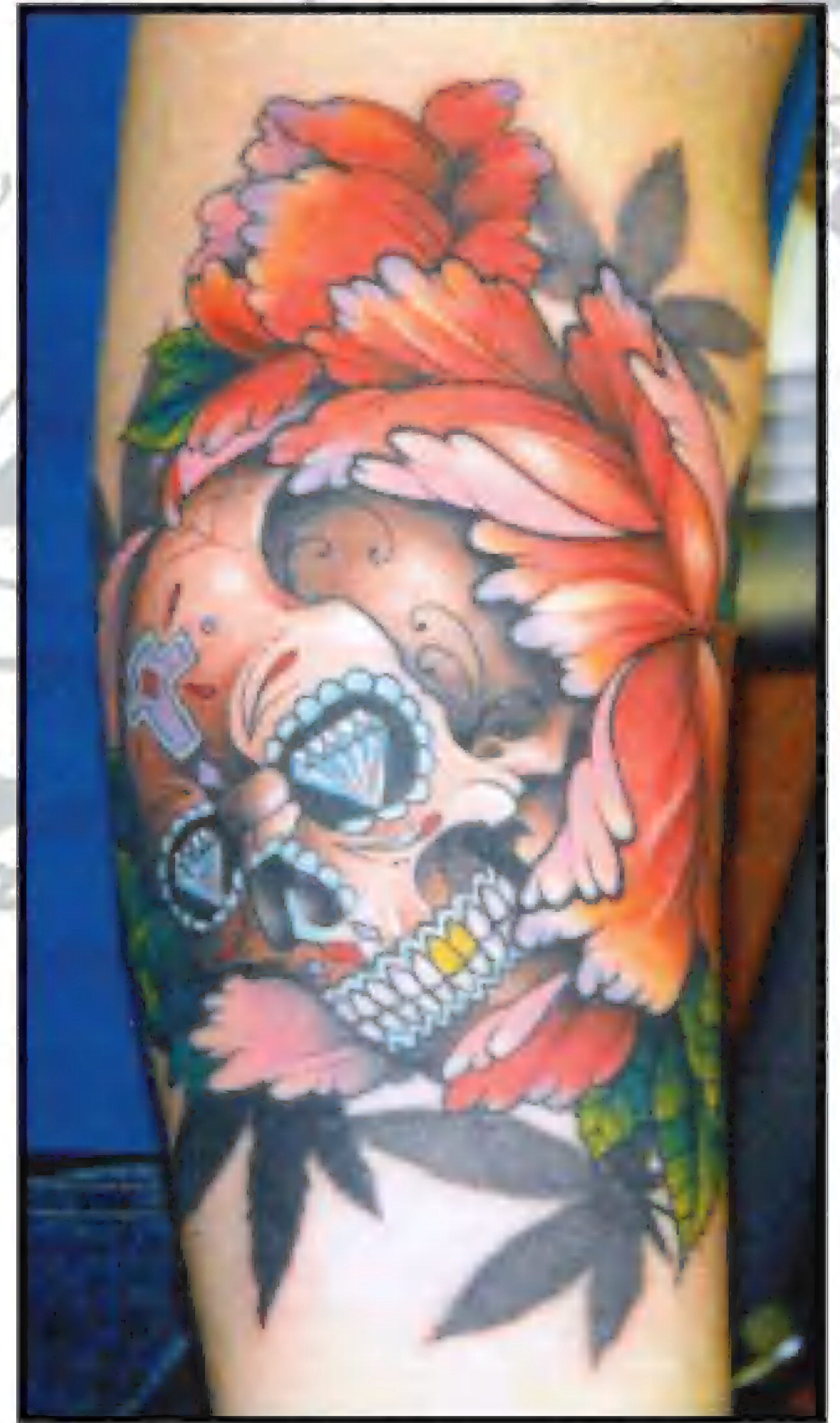
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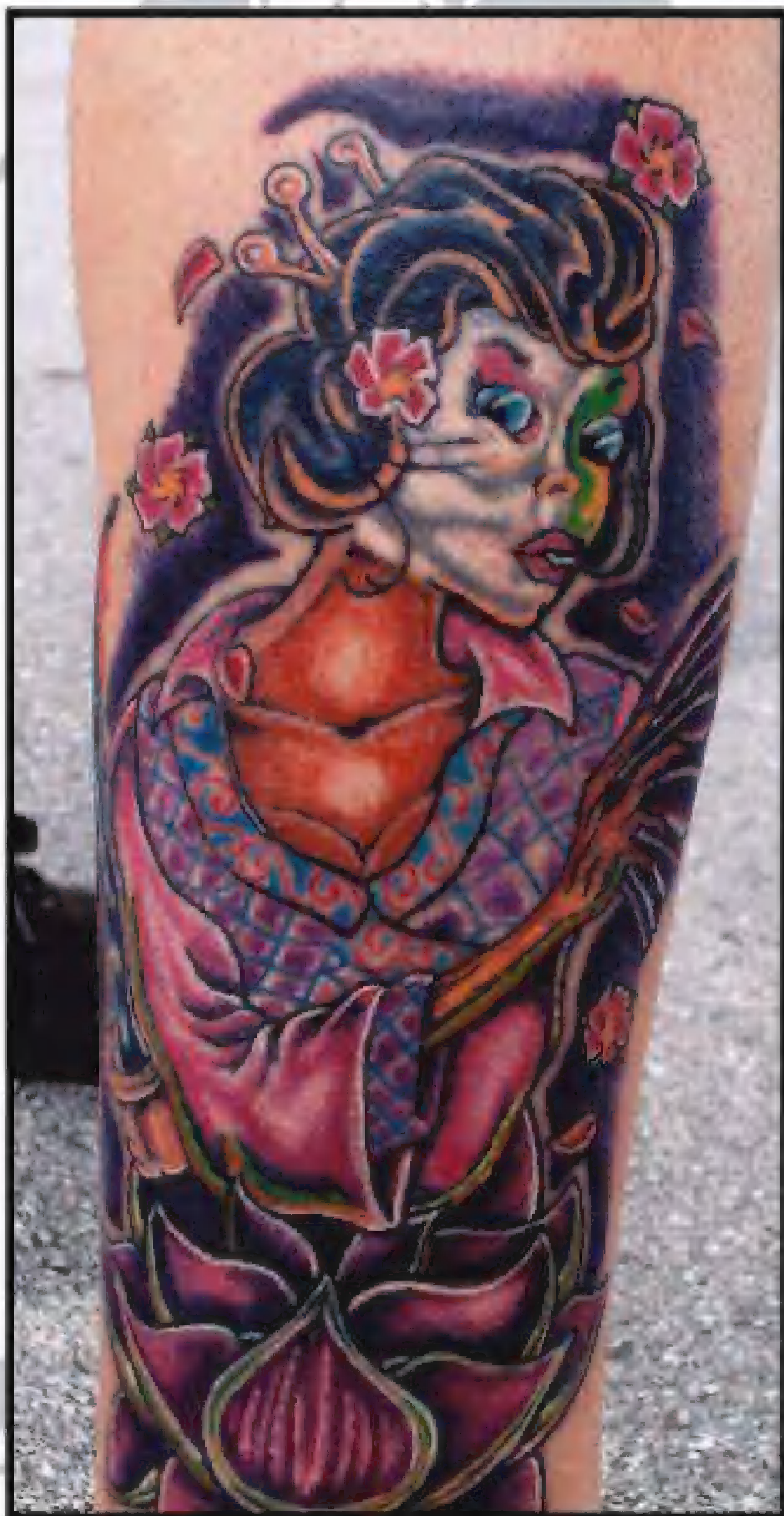
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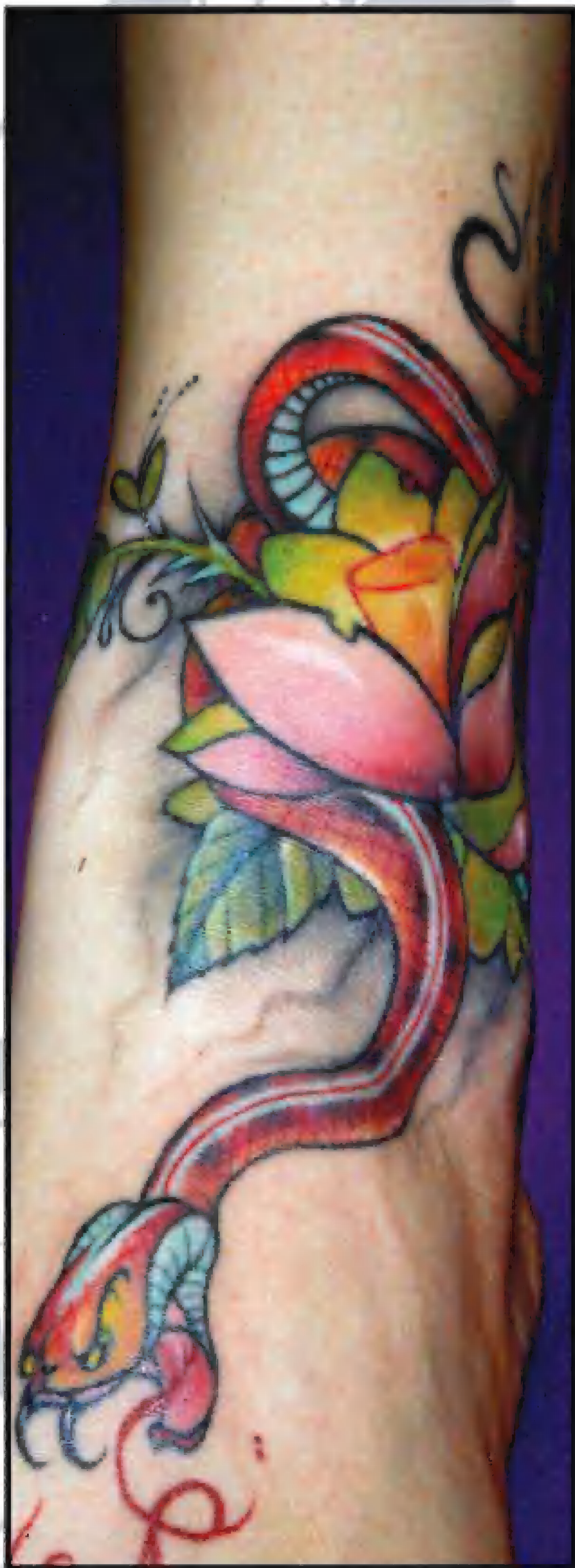
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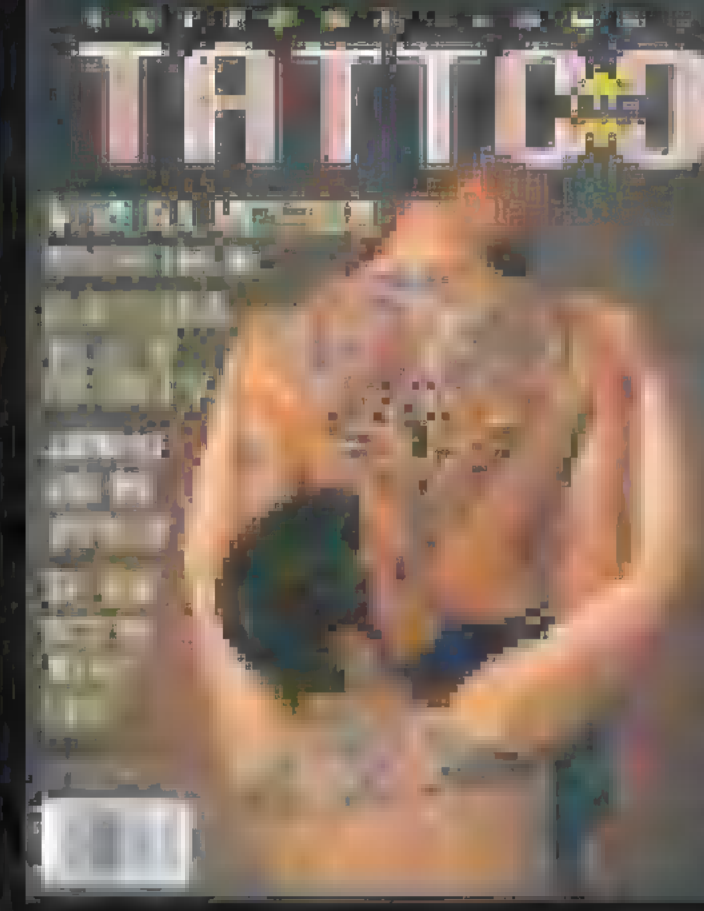
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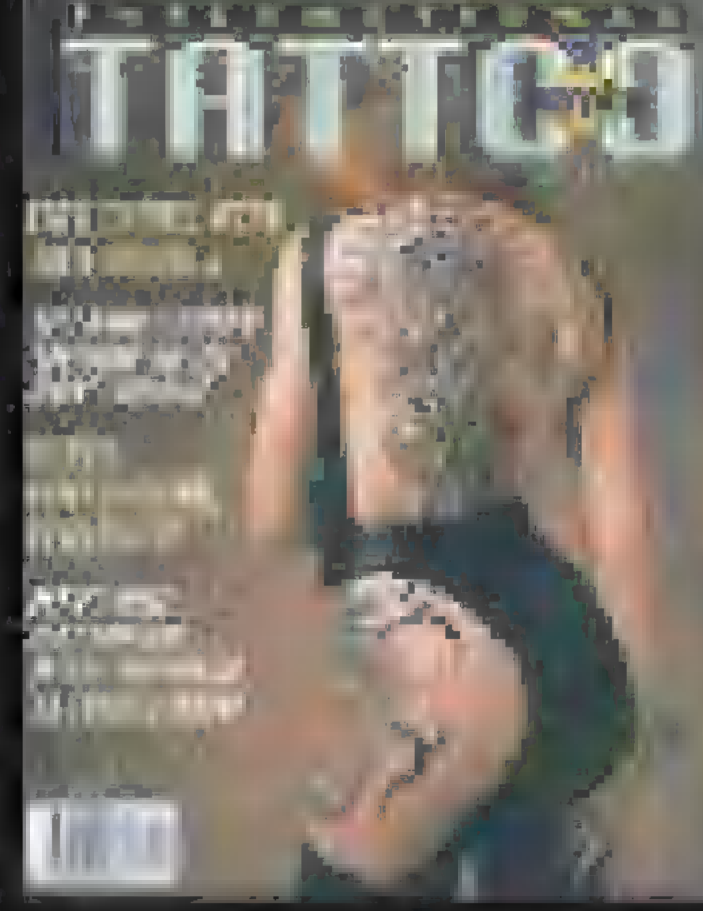
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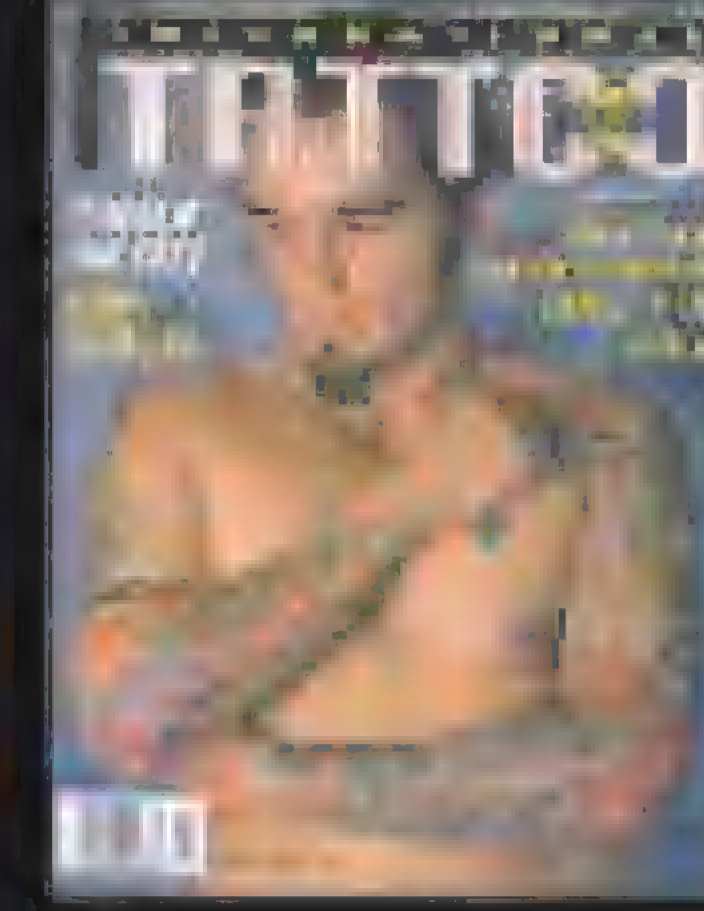
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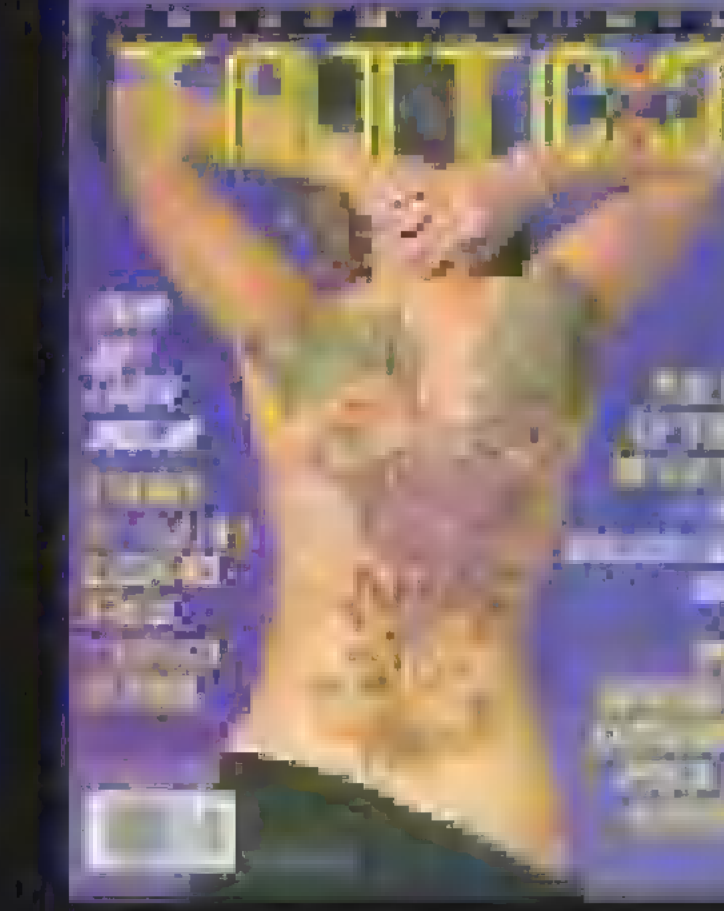
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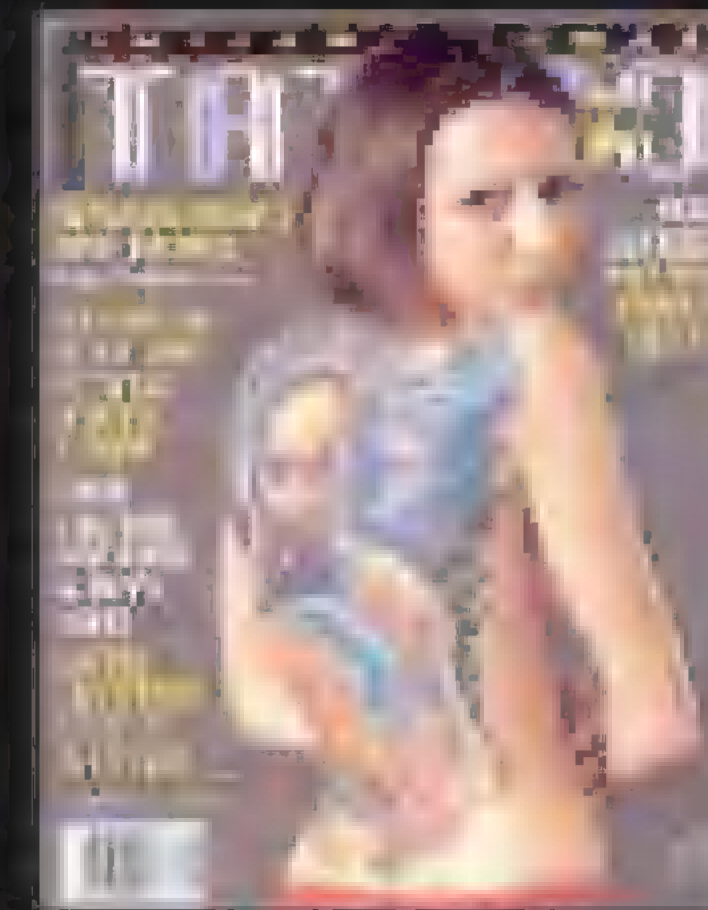
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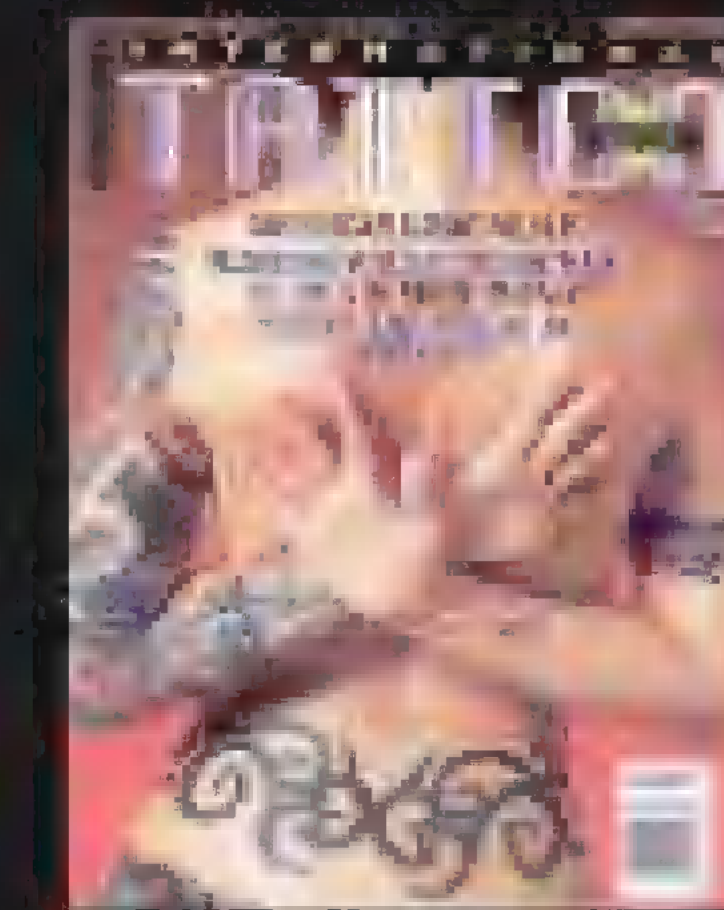
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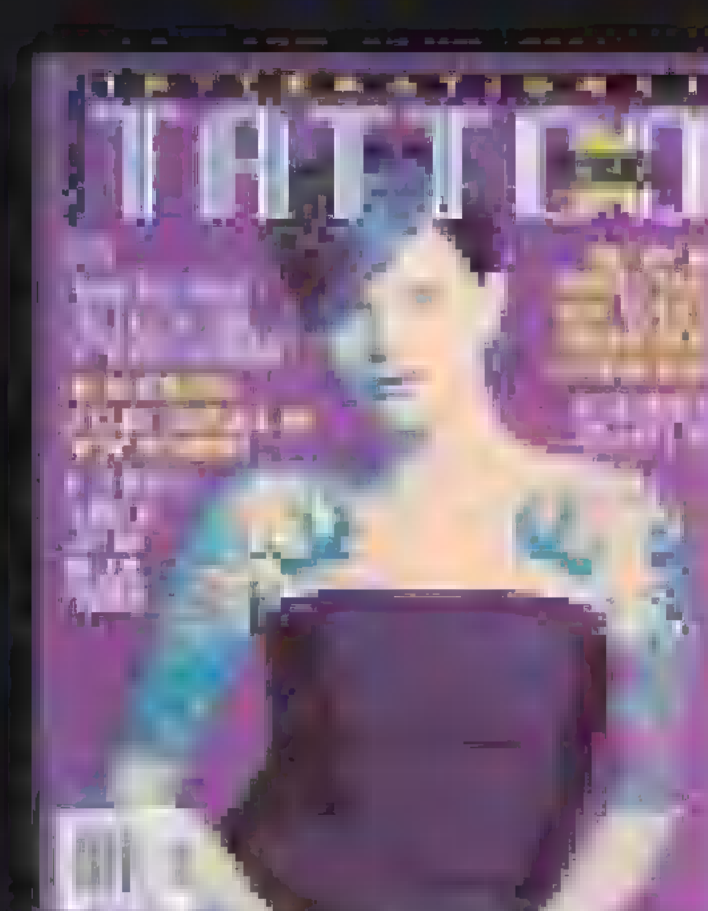
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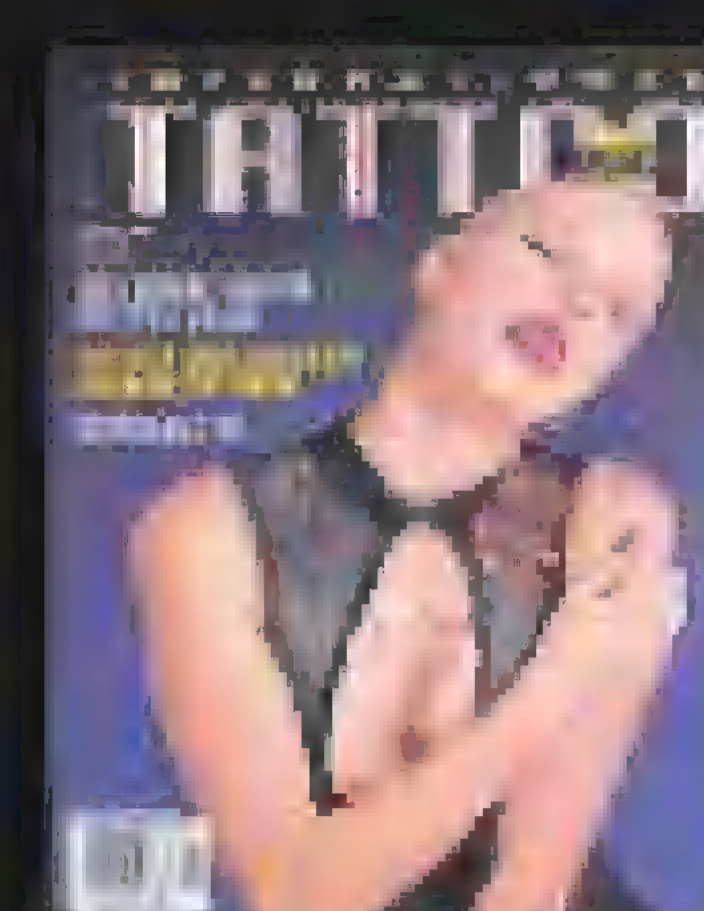
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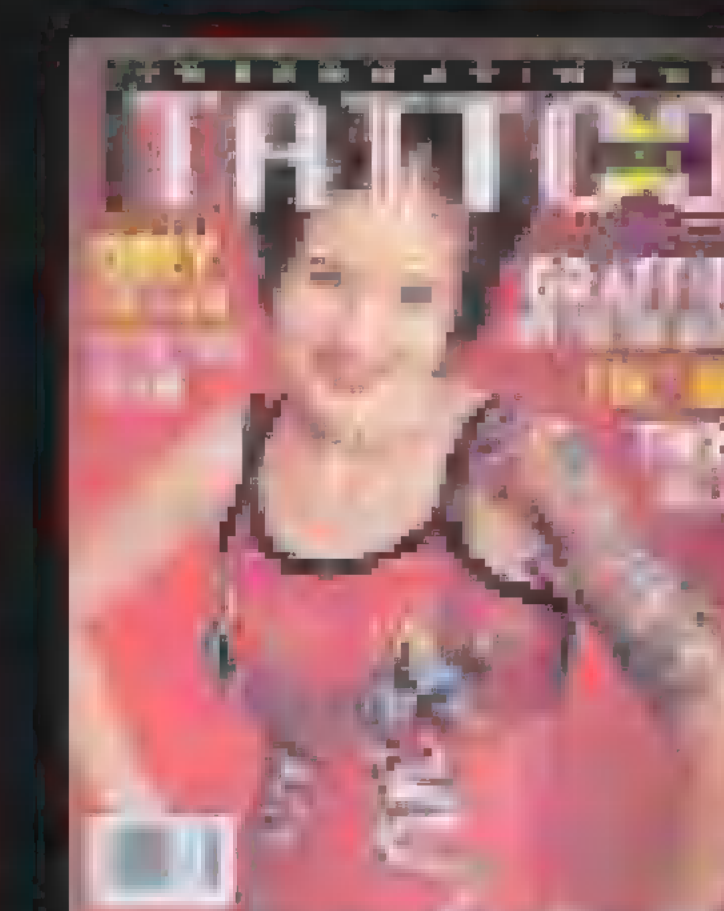
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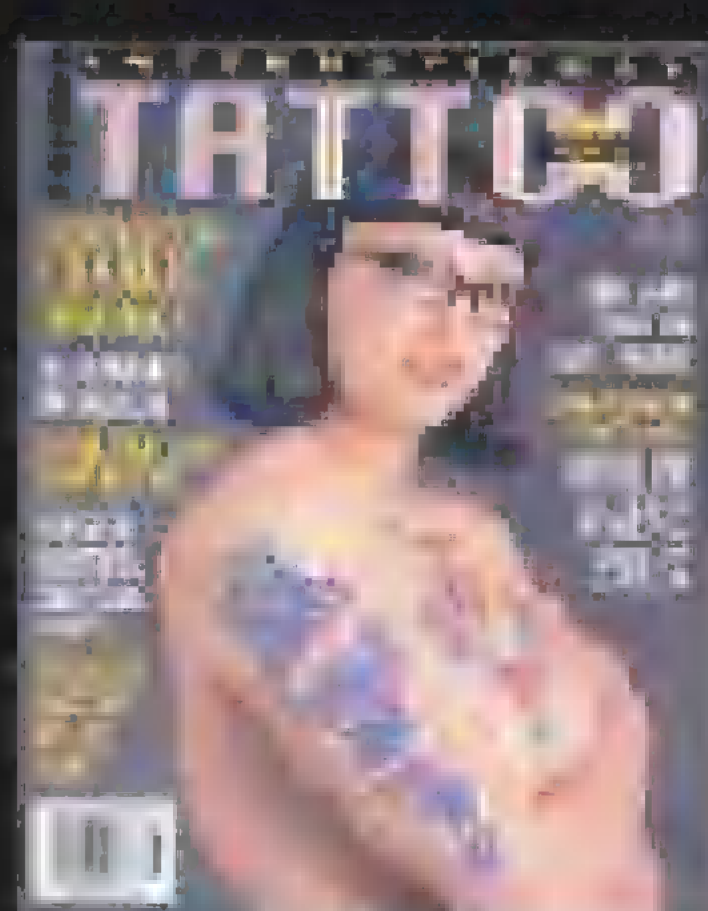
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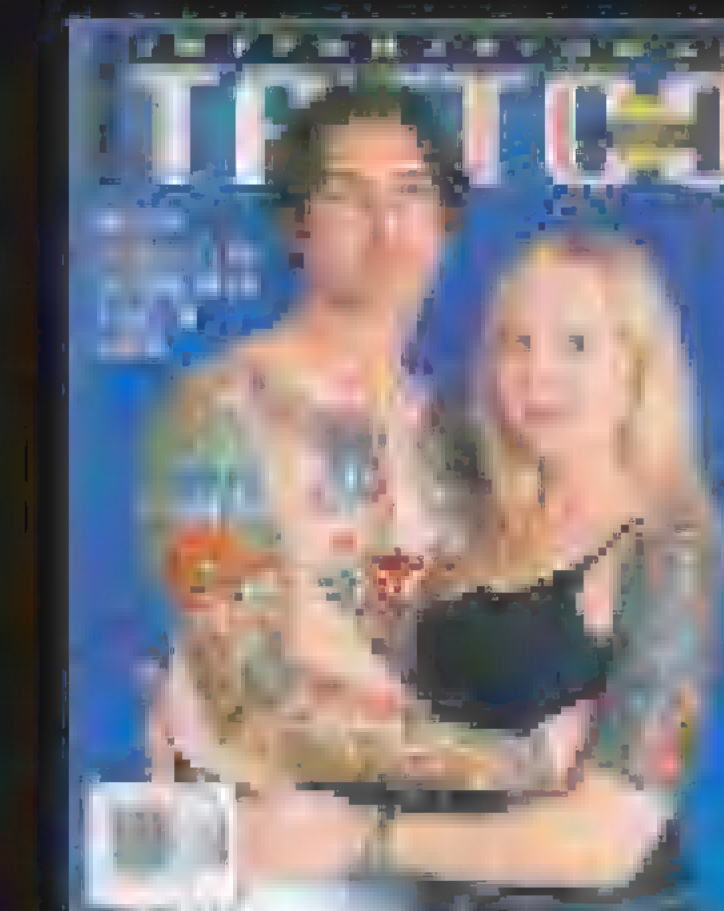
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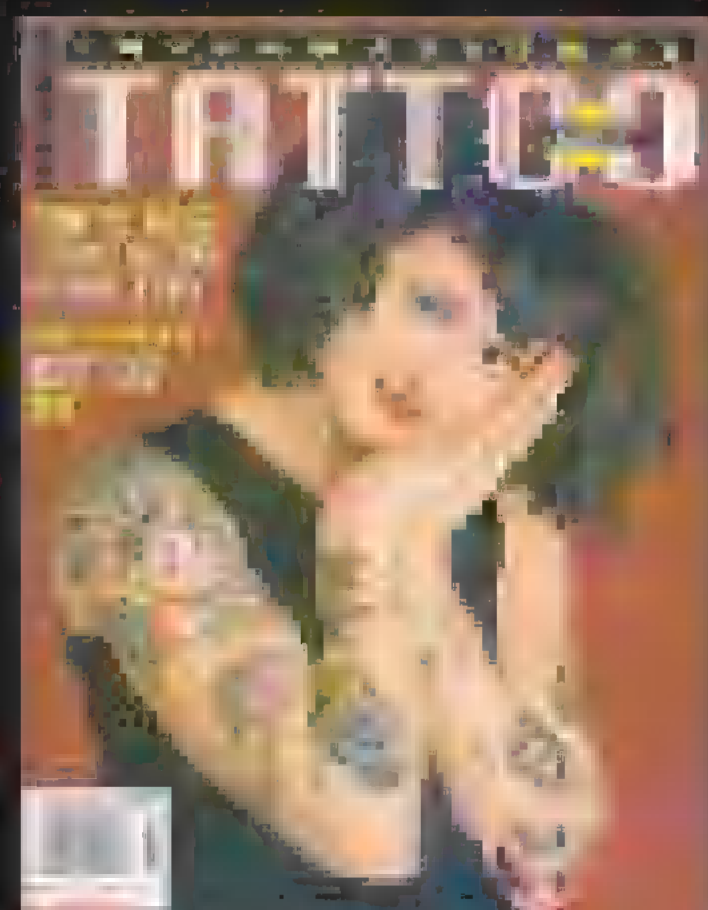
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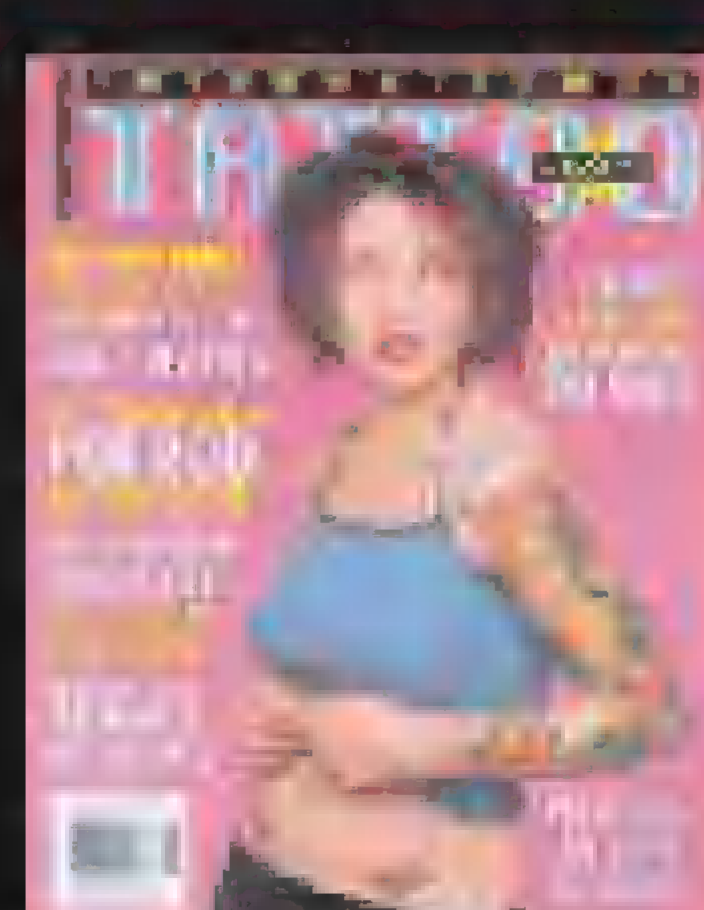
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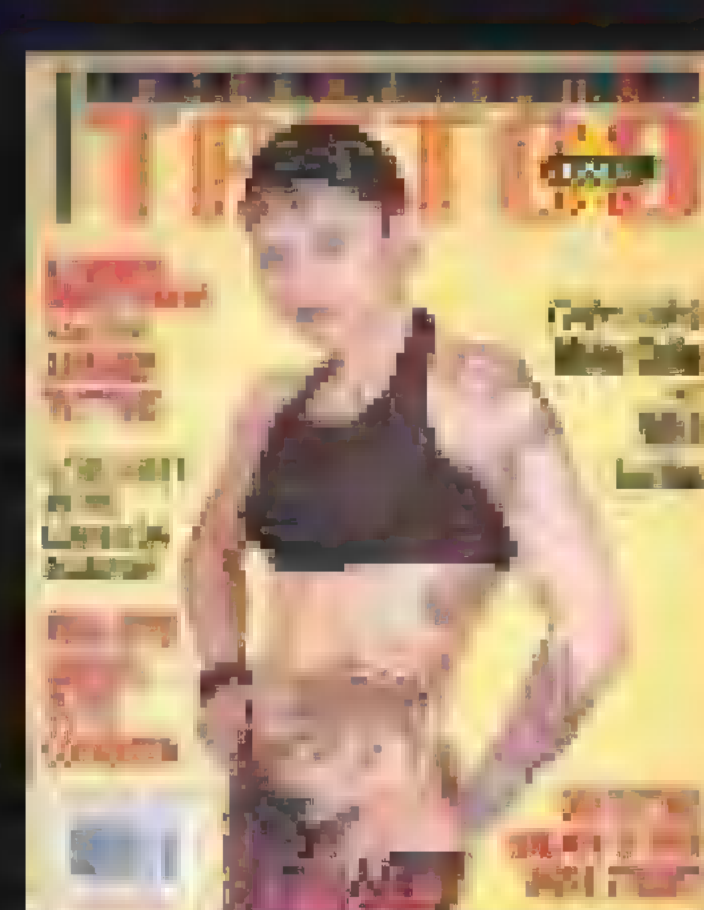
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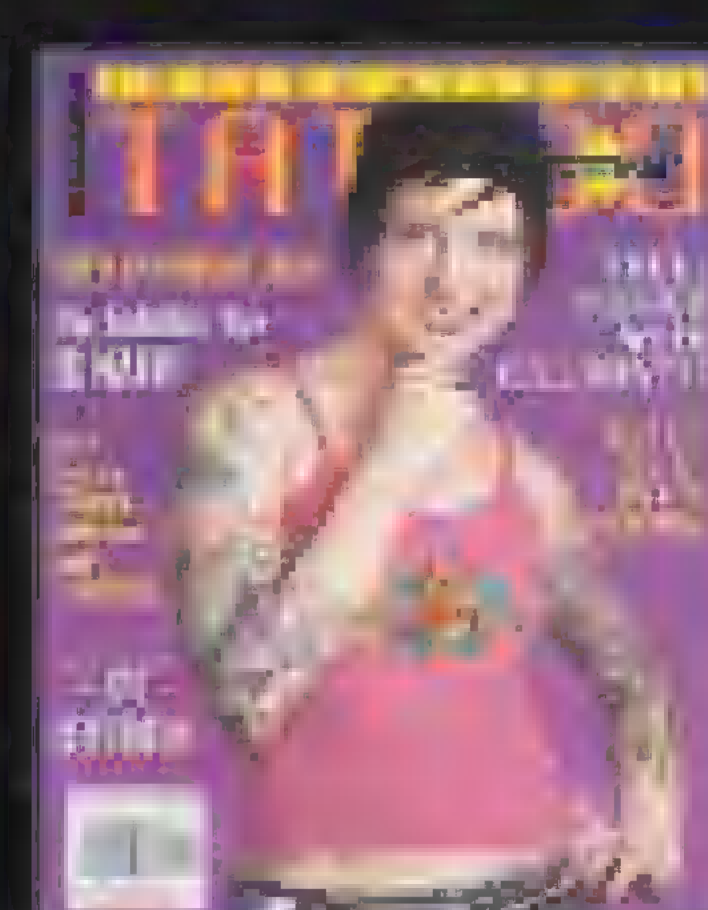
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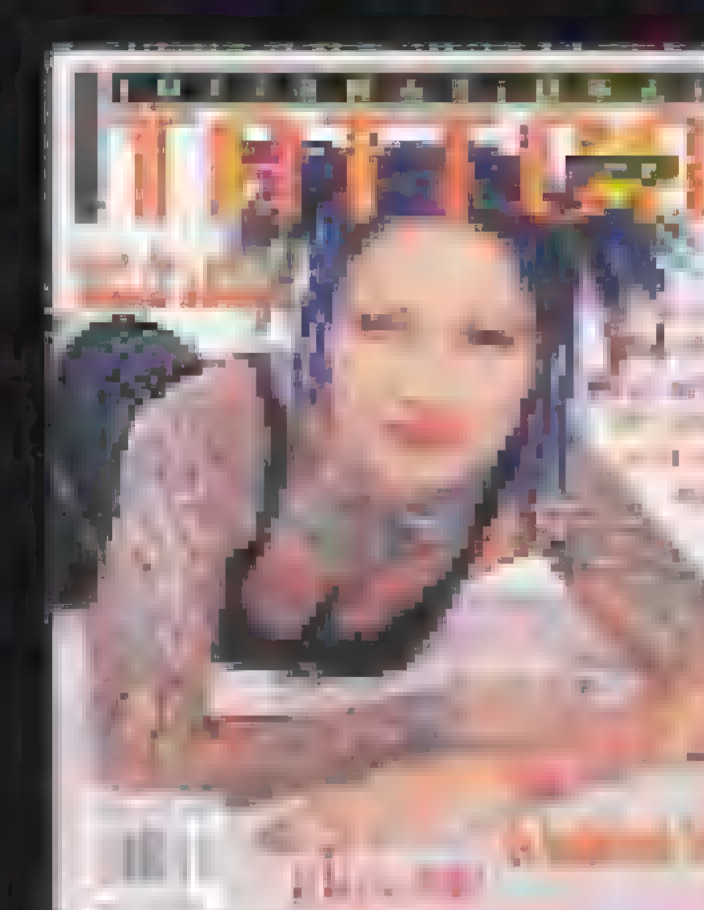
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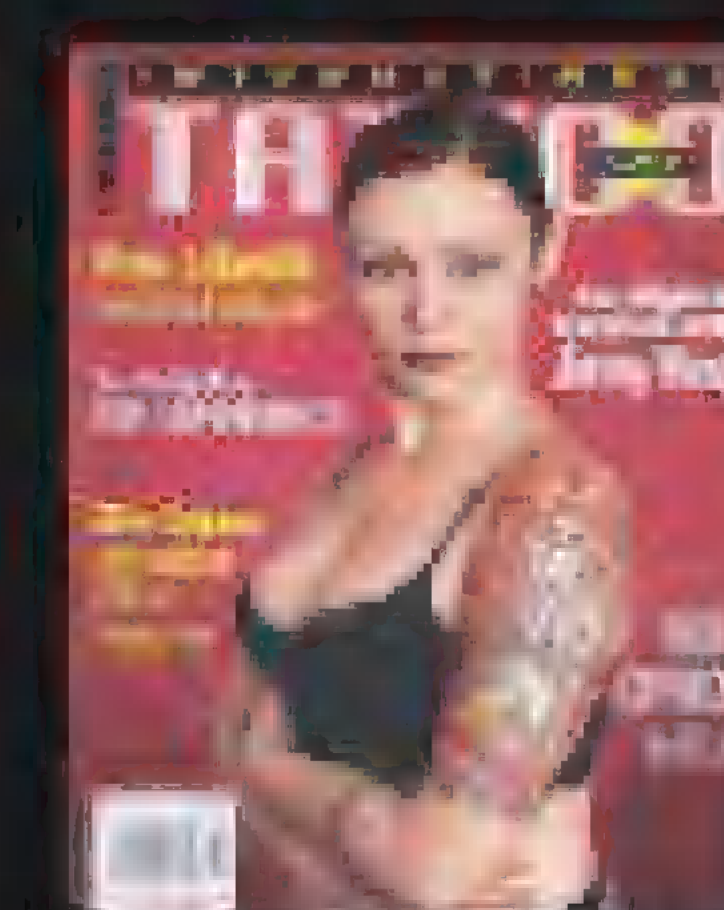
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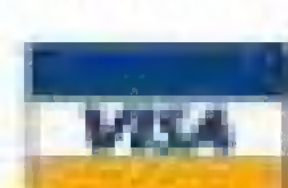

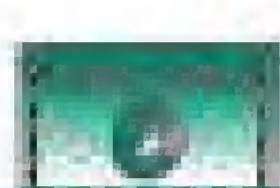
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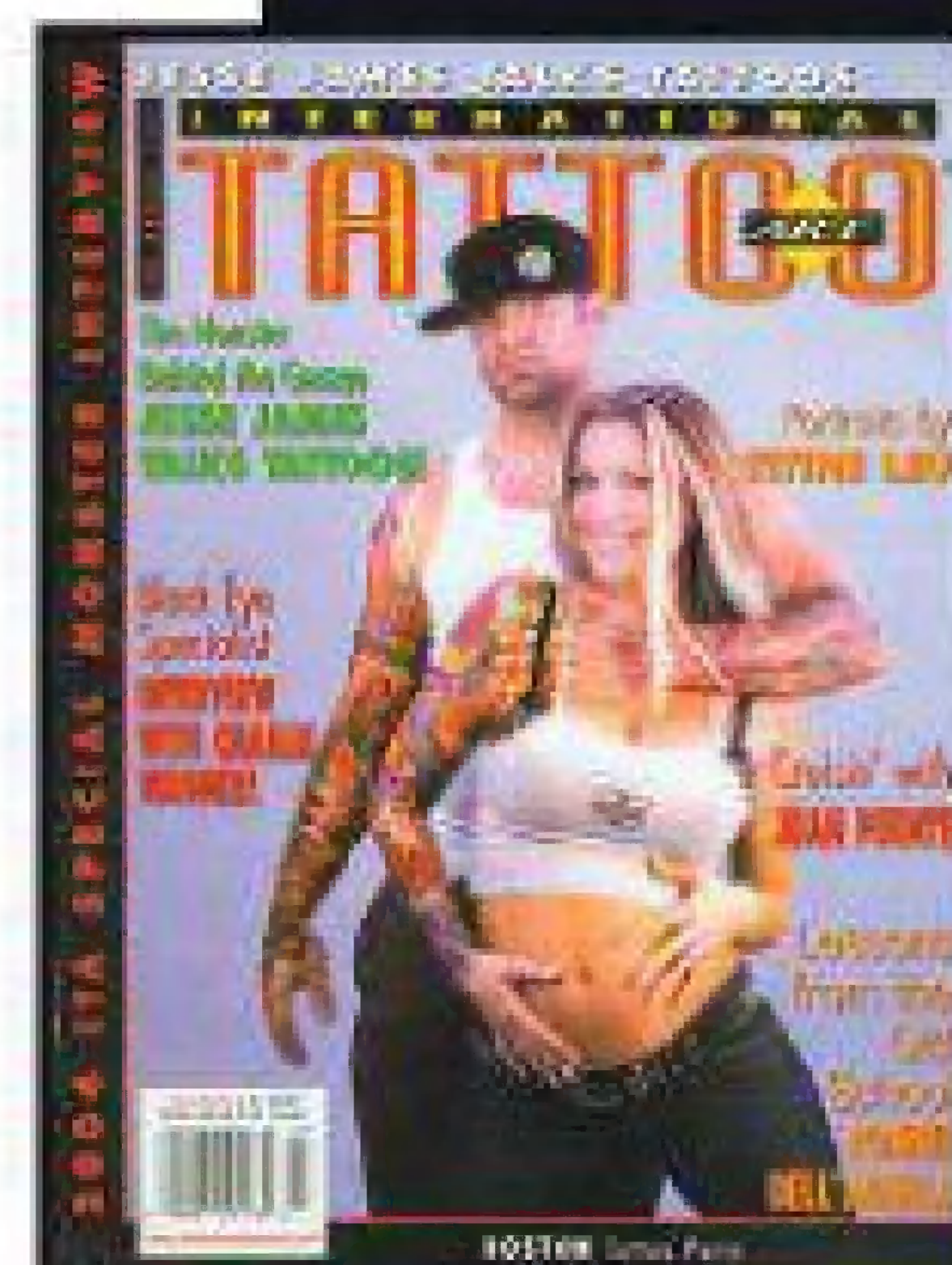
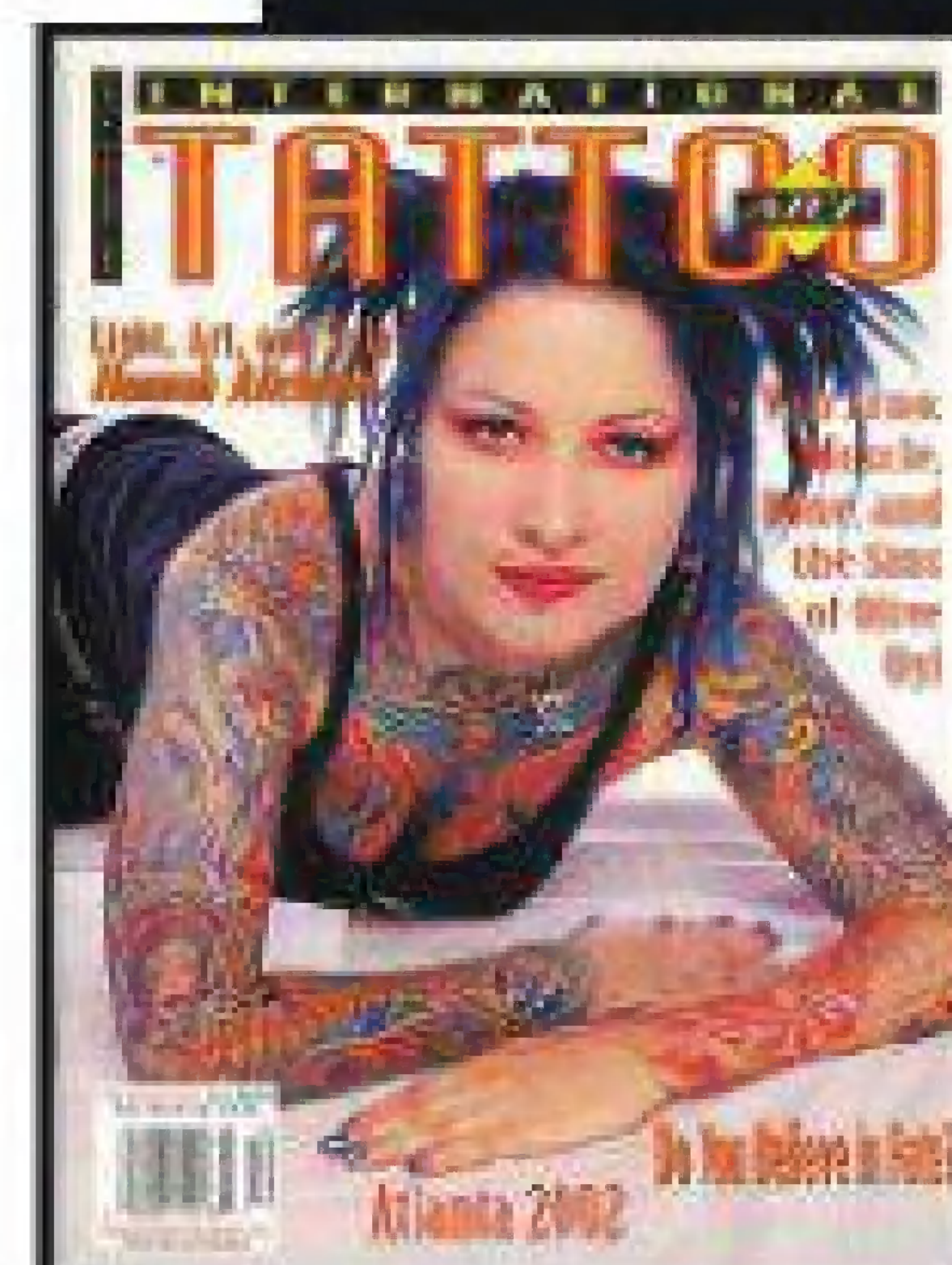
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